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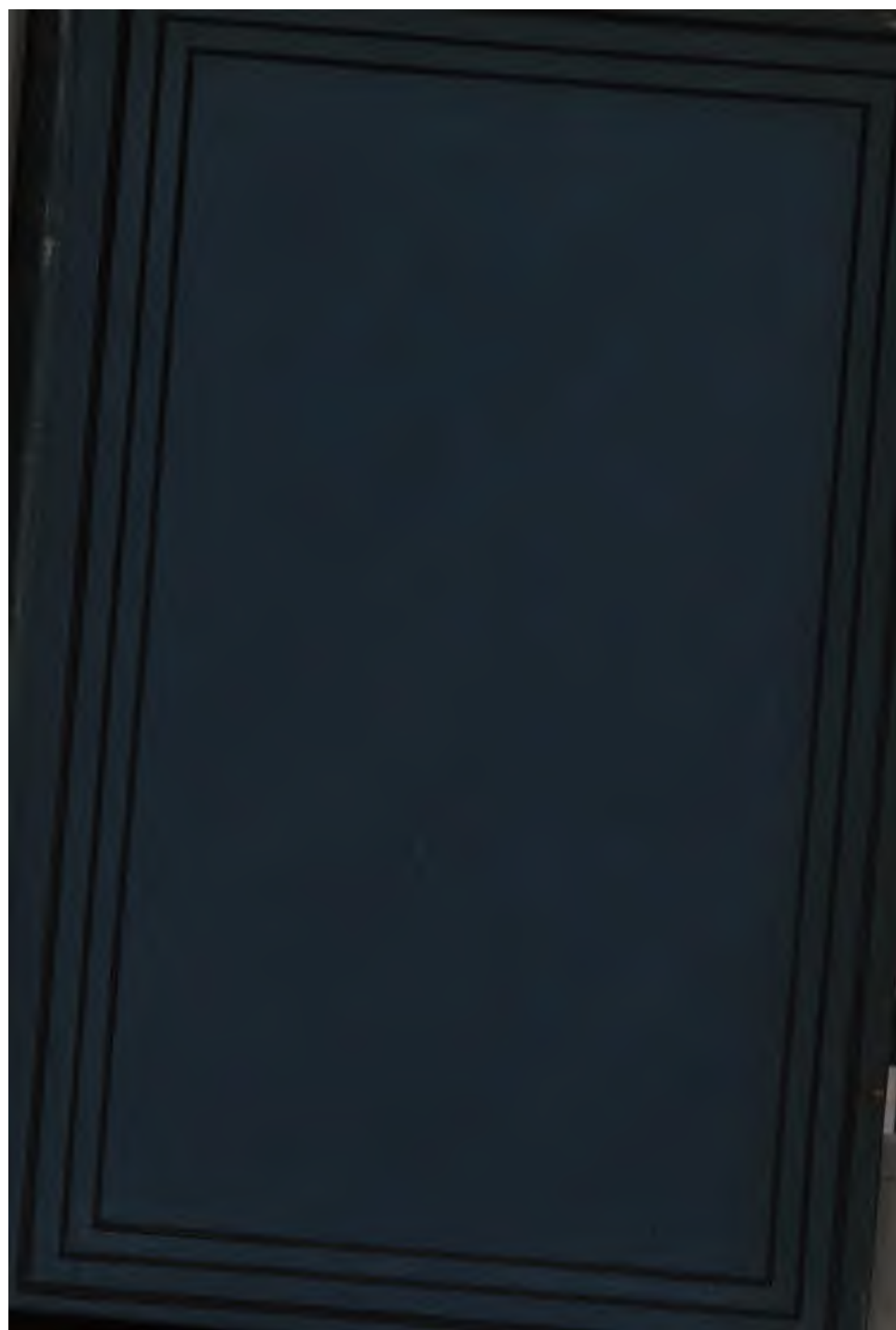
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FROM A BOOK FUND COMMEMORATING  
RUTH GERALDINE ASHEN  
CLASS OF 1931

It's a sad thing  
when a man is to be so soon forgotten  
And the shining in his soul  
gone from the earth  
With no thing remaining;

And it's a sad thing  
when a man shall die  
And forget love  
which is the shiningness of life;

But it's a sadder thing  
that a man shall forget love  
And he not dead but walking in the field  
of a May morning  
And listening to the voice of the thrush.

—R.G.A., in *A Yearbook of  
Stanford Writing*, 1931

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AND OTHER POEMS.

BY H. E. CLARKE.

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# STORM-DRIFT:

Poems and Sonnets.

BY

H. E. CLARKE,

AUTHOR OF 'SONGS IN EXILE,' 'REBEL TUNES,' ETC.



LONDON:

DAVID BOGUE, 3, ST. MARTIN'S PLACE,  
TRAFALGAR SQUARE, W.C.

1882.

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## STORM - DRIFT.

---

*Day and the storm, their long fight over, die  
On the red field together, shattered and spent ;  
The thunder's roar sinks to a low lament,  
The wind's shout to the shadow of a sigh,  
And over heaven the mingled armies fly  
Headlong, with trailing blood-stained banners rent,  
In one wild whirl of rout and ruin sent  
To night's abysm beneath the western sky.*

*Rags of encrimsoned cloud by tempest torn,  
Dyed with day's blood, fierce shapes that change and shift,  
Passions and sorrows and sins in mingled flight ;  
But sometimes some faint ray of a moon unborn,  
Or thro' the horror of the hurrying drift  
A star of Hope on the steadfast brows of night.*



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# STORM-DRIFT :

## POEMS AND SONNETS.

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### A STORY OF SALERNO.

Tancred, Prince of Salerno, puts his daughter's lover to death,  
and sends his heart to her in a golden cup; she pours water  
upon it which she had poisoned, and so dies.

BOCCACCIO'S DECAMERON.

TOO beautiful for weeds of widowhood,  
Too fair a bride for sorrow seemèd she;  
Love's fire in her dark eyes still unsubdued  
Smouldered unseen, and youth's blood warm and  
free  
Glowed in her perfect face deliciously,  
And still to come was all the best of life—  
She had not loved, though she had been a wife.

The old dotard duke, her father's choice, was dead—  
God give him peace !—and she was free as air ;  
Full many a mass for his soul's sake was said ;  
Morning and night she breathed his name in  
prayer ;  
But she was young, and life was very fair,  
And freedom after bondage fairer still ;  
She could not grieve e'en if she had the will.

There, in her father's court, she dwelt once more  
As when a maiden, brightest of the throng  
Of high-born beauties. Even as of yore  
The days were wooed to death with dance and  
song,  
And broidery work, and yet were sometimes  
long ;  
Not always could the ladies' jests beguile ;  
There seemed a sameness in the courtiers' smile.

This thin court-life was but a gilded toy,  
A jingling bauble, a poor hollow shell ;  
No pulse of nature—no full-blooded joy—  
True-ringing mirth—true passion's heave and  
swell—  
Did ever break the dreary, deadening spell.  
And day by day there grew in Ghismond's breast  
Impatient longings, not to be suppressed.

O, for a life that should be worth the name—  
A human life of Love and Hope and Grief,  
Of plan and deed and failure, praise and blame,  
Strained anxiety and sweet relief;  
A woman's life of firm and fond belief,  
Devotion deep and high as seas and skies,  
And silent, unbeheld self-sacrifice !

No gay court butterfly her heart could gain,  
Though many a lordling for the treasure strove,  
To flutter shattered from her bright disdain,  
And deem for days that he must die of love.  
Not any prayer that haughty heart could move,  
And many thought that Ghismond heart had  
none ;  
Ah, they shall know the truth e'er all be done.

That fortress, to their arms impregnable,  
Without a siege shall soon capitulate,  
And Love within the inmost citadel  
Shall as a monarch rule with regal state.  
He comes whose touch can open every gate,  
Yet humbly clad and in no conqueror's guise,  
Wearing nor silk nor gold to catch her eyes ;

With neither wealth, nor lands, nor ancient name,  
Nor pride of place—with knightly spurs to win,



With shield unblazoned, without friends or fame.

Yet ope your gates, O fortress, and begin

To sound, ye trumpets, ere he enter in.

Nay, silently he comes whose steps ere long

Shall thrill her soul like music or sweet song.

Over the battlements as in a dream,

One eve she leaned, and gazed upon the sea ;

Below Salerno's lights began to gleam,

Yet never on the grim old town looked she,

But on the far horizon ceaselessly,

As one whose vision, clear and unconfined,

Pierced to the Land of Dreams that lay behind.

What doth she see in that mysterious land

With those deep, liquid, wonder-haunted eyes ?

'Tis well for her she doth not understand

All the dread secret that before her lies—

Only she sees Love fade from Youth that dies—

And as she turns a tear is on her face ;

Her bosom heaves beneath its snowy lace.

But hark—a careless song doth fill her ear,

And first she starts, so silent was the night,

Then stays to think how musical and clear

The singer's voice is, and his song how bright

And mirthful ; in the wan moonlight

She sees him come the winding way along,  
And dreams a moment 'tis the God of Song,

So much he hath of godlike strength and grace,  
The ease of power, the body's perfect poise,  
And above all the song-lit, fearless face ;  
No court-bred youth hath such a shape or voice.  
He passes by, but at the rustling noise  
Of lady's silk turns round again—anon,  
Bows to the ground before her, and is gone—

As if a star had flashed across the sky,  
Leaving it darker when the splendour died.  
She feels her loneliness more utterly,  
The emptiness of power and pomp and pride.  
To have lived once fully, to have loved, laughed,  
sighed,  
Fought and endured where doughtiest deeds are done  
In the fight's front, and sunk to rest well won,

This had been better, spite of dust and din,  
And spite of scars, than blank and vapid peace.  
Where no wounds fall there are no crowns to win,  
And action to the young is more than ease ;  
Too well, too long, she has known vain thoughts  
like these,  
And now, unwitting of the change to be,  
“There is no help—no hope—no change for me,”

She murmurs, gazing out once more afar ;  
But darkness blots the distance from her view ;  
The cloudless sky is bright with many a star,  
The moon rides up a path of deepest blue,  
And out at sea lights glimmer far and few,  
Where vessels motionless wait for the breeze ;  
And no sound comes but whispering of the seas.

And so right wearily she turns away ;  
Yet to her lips that merry song will rise,  
And in her dreams again she hears the lay,  
And the bright face, lighted with glad surprise  
To see her beauty, haunts her sleeping eyes ;  
Yea, once bold Sleep—wild jester that he is !—  
Made the bright singer seem to snatch a kiss.

Next day they wandered underneath the shade  
Of sun-lit leaves that dappled the soft grass,  
Tall knight and courtier gay and high-born maid,  
Grave councillor and page and waiting lass ;  
And midst the brilliant crowd she saw him pass.  
Her heart leaped suddenly—she knew not why—  
But spake to one beside most carelessly :

“ Whence comes the stranger ? Did you mark him  
not ? ”

And he, a love-lorn wight of aspect sad,

Said, " 'Tis a new-come kitchen-help, God wot,  
Or some such menial—a low-born lad."

"Aye, sir," laughed she, "methought he seemed  
too glad

And blithe of heart for any court to rear—  
A happy face is strange and welcome here.

"Nay, what a sigh! Take heart of grace, my  
lord ;

I'd know the name of this same scullery-knight ;  
Sure such an one should scarcely wear a sword !

Perchance you speak from knowledge less  
than spite.

I pray you, go and bring his name aright,  
Or better, send him hither ;" and he bowed  
And did her bidding, cursing not aloud.

And at the stranger's eyes her face took flame,

And as he knelt her heart beat loud and fast :

"Guiscard, saidst thou? Thou canst not help thy  
name.

The Prince's messenger?" and she had passed,

Leaving him kneeling, tremulous, aghast,

Who was as yet in youth's best lore unwise—  
Unlearned in love and love's sweet mysteries.

But afterward his learning grew apace,

For fate was kind, and very oft they met.

In good Prince Tancred's eyes the youth found  
grace,

And in his daughter's something sweeter yet—  
Something that made him all things else forget.  
Poor birth, low life, and dull, inglorious care,  
At Love's all-powerful touch grew great and fair.

How thou art born, O Love, or how dost grow,  
Upon what meat dost feed, why wane and die,  
We know not; only this we surely know,  
We all shall love, and have no reason why;  
And it may be ere long that Love shall fly;  
We only know that thou wilt have thy way;  
We cannot make thee come or fly or stay.

Man is a child again beneath thy spell,  
Desiring moons and suns with sobs and tears,  
Deaf for a season to the sounding knell  
That rises higher with the gathering years,  
And thunders death and doom unto his ears,  
Saying, "Thou diest;" Love and all things pass;  
In one short hour thou diest as the grass.

Thou drawest here two lives from very far,  
And each of other shall become a part;  
O, woe to him who shall thy doing mar!  
A jealous and a vengeful god thou art!  
Thy curse on those that sunder heart from heart

Is heavy as the curse that fell on Cain,  
An everlasting brand on brow and brain.

Thou breakest all the world's strong barriers  
down ;

Bowest the high and raisest up the low ;  
Iphigenia mak'st equal with the clown,  
Cophetua with the beggar ; even so  
Ghismond and Guiscard to each other grow.  
Princess and messenger by thee made one,  
Together now their deathward course must run.

Yet Guiscard long believed it but a dream,  
And cursed the vanity that mocked his eyes.  
"I am but one of those poor fools who deem  
That every woman for their love's sake sighs ;  
This scorned I most of human vanities ;  
My scorn shot forth too early, grew too fast ;  
The snare I laughed at takes my feet at last.

"Yet when I gave the letter her hand shook,  
And her lips quivered, and her cheek grew pale ;  
Aye, thrice she tried into my eyes to look,  
And thrice beneath my eyes her eyes did fail,  
Nor might her sudden turn of head avail  
To hide the blush thereafter—yet she spake  
As a queen speaks to slaves that cringe and  
quake."

So with himself he communed doubting still,  
And sometimes she was gracious, sometimes cold,  
And like a flower beneath or heat or chill,  
Guiscard drooped earthward, or was blithe and  
bold

At every change. And the slow seasons rolled,  
Plying their silent task beheld of none,  
Till the sudden blossom burst into the sun.

One eve Ghismond stood gazing on the sea,  
Even as she had gazed on that first night  
She saw his face—sadly and wistfully,  
As though she saw far off a mournful sight;  
The skies were blood-red with the sunset light,  
The sea moaned restless to a restless breeze,  
And Ghismond's heart was restless as the sea's.

Once, and but once, for a brief space we have life—  
Once, and but once, for a briefer are we young—  
And the passionate air and ardent earth are rife  
With Love that laughs the springtime buds  
among,  
Life's one best gift, as all have said or sung,  
Once, and but once, for a little, little while,  
Shall we yield our gift unused and only smile?

Yea, when cool water flows where blood doth beat  
Now in our veins so hotly—not till then.

There be some, 'tis said, who have subdued its heat  
From the very first, who to our humble ken  
Seem either more than gods or less than men,  
And move not us who are neither less nor more,  
But merely men and women to the core.

And Ghismond's heart cried, " Help me, or I die ;  
Feed me with love ere I fall famishèd ;  
Youth's dawn is passed, and lo, mid-noon is nigh,  
And I grow faint, from dawn to noon unfed."  
And Ghismond, casting round her eyes for bread,  
Found but the petrified court life alone,  
And knew her heart must die or turn to stone.

A rustle of leaves, a windy heaven above,  
A restless sea that felt the coming moon,  
A wanton breeze that laughed, and whispered love,  
And kissed her lips, and sighed as like to swoon,  
Then rose as one made bolder by the boon,  
And tossed the lace to leave her white throat bare,  
And drew his amorous fingers through her hair,

And held her hard, and kissed her fierce and long,  
Then let her go, and frolicked forth to sea,  
Leaving her flushed, the rude rogue, bold and  
strong,  
Whose blithe caresses were too wild and free  
For a fair lady nurtured tenderly,



But yet were better than the cringe and crawl  
Of the court spaniels herding in the hall,

Whence she had fled to escape the loneliness  
Most dread of all that dwells amid the crowd,  
Thrills the wild dance, moans through the music's  
stress,  
Stands grim and silent when the mirth is loud,  
And waits beside the throne clad in a shroud.  
Of old a corpse to festivals men brought;  
Now is no need ; it comes to all unsought.

O Wind of Spring, there is magic in thy breath ;  
O wild Spring Wind, there is passion in thy  
kiss ;  
Thou raisest up the flowers from darksome death,  
With tales of love that dying they must miss—  
For our tired souls, wilt thou do less than this ?  
For her sad heart, O passionate Wind of Spring,  
Bring love and healing on thy wandering wing.

" I have sinned, surely, in Love's sight," said she,  
" And he hath gone from me for evermore."  
Lo, a light step—and one came silently,  
With a drooping head, as though a load he bore,  
Not like the fearless singer who before  
Checked his glad song at sight of her—he came  
Slowly and sadly, changed and yet the same.

He bowed before her, but raised not his eyes,  
And so had passed; her white hand bade him  
stay.

Up to her brow she felt the warm flush rise,  
Saw from his face all colour die away,  
And said, "Thou art altered who wast once so  
gay;

Thou art thoughtful who wast merry, pale and  
wan

Who wast ruddy once—where is thy gladness  
gone?

"Is thy love false? or all too true, too long?  
Or is thy gold gone to some gambling page?  
Hath any with thy master done thee wrong?  
Is thy labour doubled, or is halved thy wage?  
No greater ills befit thy place or age,  
And these may all be conquered—be of cheer—  
Be thy grief spoken, I am fain to hear."

He paused awhile as one in doubt and pain:

"Lady," he said at last, "in years gone by,  
My mother tells me that I wept amain  
A night and day because it seemed that I,  
Wanting but just the round moon from the sky,  
Found it not given me forthwith, and now  
That longing has returned, I know not how."

“Moonstruck, indeed !”—“Aye, lady, moonstruck  
—mad—

She, queen of heaven, so pure, so fair, so far—  
And I ”— “Thou dost forget the Latmian lad ;  
There was a scandal noised from star to star !  
He but a shepherd too ; thy chances are  
Far better than thou deemest ; dull despair  
Ne’er won aught yet, but be thou bold and dare.”

“Yea, that will I !”—like a silver trumpet’s peal  
The words rang. “On one throw I stake the  
whole—

O Moon of Love’s high heaven, to thee I kneel—  
Thou swayest all the tides of all my soul,  
And thou canst fill my life with joy or dole,  
Canst kiss me into heaven or stop my breath  
With but a word—I win or thee or death.

“If I am but Love’s fool speak thou the word,  
My life is in thy hand—the guards are nigh ;  
If through mere vanity I have so long erred,  
Speak and be merciful, and let me die ;  
For hear—I love thee—I love thee—even I,  
As other wiser men their equals love.  
Have I dared little ? Am I bold enough ? ”

The wild words died, the speaker bowed his head,  
Still kneeling at her feet to hear his doom,

And there was utter silence. Then, instead  
Of any word, a delicate perfume,

A white hand gleaming tremulous in the gloom  
Before his face, and in that hand he wist  
Love and not Death was given him as he kissed.

Slowly he rose, made drunken with delight,

And, like the moon's track on the dusky sea,  
His life's way shone before him dazzling bright ;

One moment he stood dazed ; then breathèd she  
His name, low, softly, and caressingly,  
And lips sought lips, and lingered close and long,  
And well she feels his circling arms are strong.

O, for a space they are as gods, they twain ;

They touch not earth, they breathe no mortal  
breath ;

They are out of reach of sorrow and of pain,

Beyond the touch of Time or Change or Death ;

Till she at length his strong clasp looseneth.

Panting they lean against the sheltering wall,  
And silence drops from Heaven like a pall.

His face is flushed and hers is marble white ;

Her eyes downcast, but his on fire with love ;

His hand seeks hers that trembles with delight,

Then nestles there as 'twere a tiny dove ;

Once, twice, and yet again his glad lips move

To speak, but alway ere the words can come  
Joy catches all his breath and strikes him dumb.

What words they spake when once their speech was  
found,

And soul went forth to soul 'neath those sweet  
skies,

While ever the dim twilight grew around,

And the stars came and wondered at her eyes ;

What burning vows—what questions and re-  
plies—

Who knows?—who knows not? Hand still  
locked in hand,

Far on into the quiet night they stand.

Her hair falls o'er him in a golden shower,

Soft, silken, with faint scent ambrosial ;

Her lips on his are like a dewy flower,

Wherefrom he drinks a wine ethereal ;

His veins thrill to her bosom's rise and fall ;

Yea, to them both on this thrice-happy night

Life seems one glorious passion of delight.

So let us leave them thus awhile in bliss,

And let no thought come near of pain or ill ;

Cling to him, happy Princess, cling and kiss ;

O, happy Guiscard, drink of Love thy fill.

Nought can annul these moments, come what will,

And come what will one life has joy enough,  
If once it find one hour of perfect love.

THERE is nought better in this life of ours  
Than the first sojourn in Love's pleasant land ;  
It lies a garden full of fruit and flowers  
Fed with fresh dew, by fragrant breezes  
fanned,  
Mid burning leagues of barren desert sand.  
Happy are they who soon its shelter win—  
Thrice happy tarrying evermore therein.

Ghismond and Guiscard in this garden strayed,  
Drinking its freshness, colour, and perfume,  
Even as through Eden, free and undismayed,  
The world's first lovers, ere their day of doom  
Wandered with God ; when yet the fatal bloom  
On the fair fruit of the Forbidden Tree  
Showed that unbroken was His dread decree.

Now might the silken courtier smile and smile,  
The ladies jest, the dull priest prose and whine ;  
For Love hath power full pleasantly to wile  
The hours where through Ghismond was wont  
to pine ;  
And when night rose above the far sea-line,  
And the world slept—oh, then right glad she went  
Swiftly unto the sea-ward battlement,

Where Guiscard waited by the banner-pole,  
Deeming the minutes hours till she should come ;  
Then from the night a space for love they stole,  
While all beside except the sea was dumb.  
How could her life be dull or wearisome  
While she could dream of last night's quiet bliss,  
Or plan some new delicious way to kiss ?

So grew their love, unseen of human eye ;  
So leaf by leaf the passion-flower unfurled ;  
So as the days passed on it filled their sky,  
And first their heaven became at last their  
world ;  
The starry eves, the fragrant morns dew-  
pearled,  
Saw their sweet meetings, and they grudged the  
day  
That took them from each other's side away.

"I cannot tell you all I would," she sighed ;  
"These stolen moments are too short and  
few."

"Let us go hence together, love," he cried,  
"And part not any more our whole lives through,  
In a new land beginning life anew,  
Far from the noise of courts, the windy strife  
And petty envy of this tinsel life."

"Nay, fair and softly, stay awhile, Guiscard ;  
Thou hast not heard me yet."—"On—on—O  
sweet !"

("Loose me, I pray, and kiss me not so hard ;  
Feel here how thou hast made my poor heart  
beat.)

Methinks there is a place where we could meet  
Oft as we would, yet baffle every eye.  
Take thou this paper—nay—no more—goodbye."

*"Go to the thicket, on the hill's north side  
Under the Castle ; search it well ; for there  
The brambles and the tangled grasses hide  
A secret entrance, made with cunning care  
Unto a grotto, long forgotten, where  
If thou descend (be wary, Love, and slow !)  
Thou shalt find Ghismond waiting thee below."*



“I kiss thee, messenger of hope,” he said ;

“Mary, I praise thee for my lady’s grace—  
There is none like her, widow, wife, or maid—  
Peerless she is in spirit as in face.”

After a weary search he found the place,  
Beneath the tangled brushwood of the dell,  
Dark, deep, and secret as a hidden well.

Then back he sped, and all the day he wrought  
Making a ropen ladder strong and stout ;  
At night once more the lonely dell he sought,  
From the pit’s mouth cleared thorns and  
brambles out,  
And, with great heart that knew not fear nor  
doubt,  
Into the darkness plungèd blithe of cheer  
To think his guerdon of delight was near.

That night Ghismond was wondrous ill at ease ;  
Her women whispered of her peevishness ;  
Not matter what they did, they could not please ;  
She would not have unbound a single tress—  
And when one would have loosened her rich  
dress,  
She cried aloud she would be plagued no more—  
Bade them begone, and locked her chamber door.

Upon the instant all transformed she was ;  
Her breath came quickly and her eyes grew  
bright ;

She turned to gaze upon her looking-glass,  
And knew she ne'er beheld a fairer sight,  
Flushed were her cheeks, her eyes like stars at  
night—

A tremor shook her that she could not quell,  
And fast her glorious bosom rose and fell.

She raised the heavy hangings from the wall—  
Disclosed an iron door, fast locked and barred—  
And, casting off her rings and jewels all,  
Took rusty keys, and with white hands strove  
hard

To open it.—“ Would thou wert here, Guiscard !  
Would thou could'st help !—too weak am I,” she  
sighed.

The last bolt crashed—the door flew open wide—

And Guiscard clasped her in his strong embrace.

“ Lady,” he said, “ ’twas Love that guided me  
I could not linger at the trysting place—  
Say, is all well ? ”—“ Aye, well indeed,” sighed  
she,

“ Now thou art here, dear love, to comfort me.”  
And speaking thus with face grown sudden white,  
Swooned in his arms for overmuch delight.

The dazzled Guiscard gazed around upon  
The shadowy glories of his lady's room ;  
Subdued light from the silver sconces shone  
O'er the rich arras, where with spur and  
plume  
Knights rode to battle ; delicate perfume  
Hung over all, and jewels manifold,  
Rare skins of beasts, and vessels of chased gold

Lay here and there ; curtains of Tyrian dye,  
Stiff with dead gold, half hid a dim alcove ;  
Holiest of holies was that sanctuary,  
The very temple and abode of Love ;  
White foam of lace o'erflowed the sheets  
thereof,  
The vallances were heavy with brocade,  
And o'er the bed two carven Cupids played.

Couches, wherein the weary limbs sank deep,  
And tiny tables curiously inlaid,  
Bearing rare wines, and many a luscious heap  
Of costly fruits from far-off climes conveyed  
(For him by Ghismond's own fair hands  
arrayed),  
All met his eyes, more dazzled than before,  
As to a couch his burden sweet he bore.

He chafed her hands with loving tenderness,  
He kissed her cheeks and pale lips tenderly ;  
With reverent care he loosenèd her dress,  
And started when his happy hand set free  
A rose-tipped globe of living ivory—  
And she revived, and trembling with surprise  
To see, blushed ruddily and hid her eyes.

Around her waist he flung impetuous arms,  
Her own closed soft and warm about his head ;  
His lips clung bee-like to those honeyed charms  
Of fragrant mingled roses white and red—  
Ne'er had so fair a bee so fair a bed !  
Oh, Eve, stretch forth thine hand!—the fruit is  
sweet.  
Oh, Adam, fear thou nothing ! Take, and eat !

The silk slipt from her shoulders bright and bare,  
As from a bud's rent sheath the flower out-  
grew,  
And from its heavy coils broke loose her hair,  
And fell about her, clothing her anew.  
His ravenous kisses thrilled her through and  
through,  
His veins beat maddening music in her ear—  
And her veins answered it for him to hear.

And to their eyes the chamber lights waxed dim,  
And the Night o'er them closed her pinions  
wide,  
And Passion's chalice bubbled to the brim,  
And two mouths touched the intoxicating tide.  
Fall—fall ye curtains and their pleasure hide !  
Close o'er them now—close o'er them, kindly  
Night,  
Prolong thy silent reign and their delight.

Let no eye see and no tongue tell their bliss,  
Nor e'en the muse their happiness profane ;  
Sacred be each embrace, each sigh and kiss,  
Each tender tear as pleasure turns to pain.  
O, kindly Night, prolong thy silent reign  
O'er the blue bay and o'er the summer sea,  
And still Salerno sleeping peacefully.

Now up Salerno's hill with regal pride,  
Strode night's fierce conqueror the jealous  
day,  
Who found those lovers sleeping side by side,  
As children who are weary of their play.  
Hesitate on Guiscard's eyes, and cried, " Away !"  
In his dull ear, whereat he did upstart,  
And she too woke, and knew 'twas time to part.

“Farewell, sweet love,” he said, a little space;  
“Now must I forth, but I shall come to thee  
Again and often.”—Her fair, sleep-flushed face  
He kissed, and by the secret door did flee;  
While in soft pillows sunk luxuriously  
She lay ’twixt sleep and waking. Even so  
Their joy began which after worked their woe.

I tune my lute no more to Love’s soft note;  
Exceeding sorrowful doth grow my song,  
Even as that from Philomel’s sweet throat,  
Who aye complaineth of the Thracian wrong;  
Alas, delight is short and pain is long.  
Sweetest delight o’erpast is soon forgot,  
But pain writes deeper on the heart God wot.

NOW that the long-sought haven is well won  
On wingèd feet the days delicious pass,  
While o’er Salerno shines the incessant sun  
From out a heaven that glows like burnished  
brass;  
Now is their pleasure perfect, and, alas,

Now is their ruin near. We fools of fate  
Snatch keenest joy while opens Hell's hot gate.

And few are happy as were then those twain  
Through the long languid days and too brief  
nights ;

Alas, keen pleasure ever turns to pain,  
And no long time last such extreme delights ;  
Comes dull Satiety or fierce Fate smites ;  
Love is torn from us, or we fail in love,  
And like a cloud dissolves the web we wove.

How oft Guiscard unto the thicket went  
On Love's dear errand, boots not now to say ;  
Awhile they had great pleasure and content,  
Were scarce an hour apart by night or day ;  
And 'stead of waning their love waxed alway,  
Till Fate grew envious and wrought them wrong—  
Speed on—speed on to sorrow, O, my Song !

Prince Tancred was a father wise and fond,  
And in his heart held nothing half so dear  
As his proud daughter, beautiful Ghismond ;  
In all his court she had no single peer  
For beauty, virtue, wisdom, counsel clear ;  
Yea, she was now the one remaining ray  
That shone upon his lonely deathward way.

And Ghismond loved her doting father well,  
And humoured him with all a woman's art;  
Patiently listened, laughed to hear him tell  
The old stories she had known for years by  
heart;  
In all his joys and sorrows bore her part,  
In health would cheer him, and in sickness tend;  
Was daughter, nurse, companion, and friend.

And in the council-hall they knew her skill;  
Clear thought, swift tongue, and ready wit to-  
aid,  
Flashing through wordy gordian knots at will  
By statecraft's lies and sophistries unstayed,  
Like the all-conquering Macedonian's blade;  
Till every baffled sage and courtier old  
The impending ruin of the State foretold.

Whereat Prince Tancred smiled and trembled  
not,  
And in the smile dissembled his disdain.  
But when his councillors grew hoarse and hot,  
And spoke together, wrangling amain,  
Saying the same thing o'er and o'er again,  
And to no purpose, addled one and all,  
He oft would leave the noisy council-hall,



And seek her chamber, that her woman's wit  
Might set the locked wheels of the State astir ;  
Thus one unlucky noon, so chanced it,  
He slept while in her chamber waiting her,  
But woke at length, to hear some silken stir  
Of garments—Ghismond came, and following  
hard  
(Sure he slept still !) his messenger, Guiscard.

So undisturbed till now had been their love  
They had grown bold with safety, so they passed,  
Murmuring and kissing unto the alcove. . . .  
Returned Prince Tancred to the hall at last,  
And seeing him the grey beards gazed aghast ;  
His blazing eyes saw nought his cheek was white  
As death—they clustered round him in affright.

“ Break up the council ! Nay, I crave your grace—  
Lords, leave me now ; send here my chamber-  
lain.”  
Then up and down the hall he 'gan to pace,  
As one struck suddenly with mortal pain,  
But spake no more, wherefore the lords were  
fain  
To do his bidding, and to leave him so,  
Deeming him mad, and prophesying woe.

Alone, he cried but once upon his child,  
In a strange voice and great, and stood and  
gazed  
As at that sight again that drove him wild;  
So came his chamberlain and found him mazed,  
Gazing at nought as one by sorrow crazed,  
With clenched hands and blazing bloodshot eye,  
And foaming lips that writhed in agony.

“Know’st thou Guiscard, my messenger? Him  
seize—  
Have bound, and bring him hither silently;  
Let those who do this bidding hold their peace,  
And do it speedily and secretly.  
Depart—I wait here till he come to me;—  
Ah, God that all the Torturer’s power to pain  
Worn out on him could purge my daughter’s  
stain.”

And so as Guiscard rose from underground,  
His lips yet warm with Ghismond’s farewell kiss,  
Upon a sudden he was seized and bound,  
And in the thicket heard swords round him hiss  
From many a scabbard.—“Sirs, what thing is  
this  
Ye do?” he asked; whereto there came reply—  
“Speak once again, Sir Messenger, and die.”

Then from the thicket rapidly they sped,  
Unto the Castle thorough secret ways.  
“ I have lived my life, and I shall soon be dead,  
Yet till Death comes I will not cease to praise  
God for my lady and my lady's grace ;  
I care not what they do in my despite—  
I have had ten men's portion of delight,”

He thought, as to the Prince they brought him in,  
And then departing left him shackled there.  
“ Lie not to me, for I have seen thy sin,  
Thou mongrel hound—thou dog, the gutter's  
heir—  
Thus curs like thee requite their master's care.  
Hell holds no devil damned so foul as thou—  
Nay, speak not, or by heaven I'll slay thee now ! ”

“ Yea—I would speak wert thou the King of  
Hell,”  
He answered, with firm lips and calmest voice ;  
“ And thou may'st kill me, but thou canst not  
quell  
My steadfast soul with curses or with noise ;  
A greater Prince I serve—I have made choice  
Of a more powerful King ; thou'rt proud and high—  
Love is as far above thee as the sky.

“And him I serve, and I go fearless hence,  
Into the grave-pit opening for me now,  
Saluting thee with humblest reverence,  
Yet looking to a juster judge than thou  
For pardon, though unto thy doom I bow.  
Farewell, O, all fair things, all joy, all mirth—  
Unto thy bosom I return, O Earth !

“Farewell, O Love, until before God’s throne  
In sight of holy heaven we twain shall stand.  
Then I will speak and claim thee for mine own,  
And God’s sweet mother shall give me thy  
hand.”  
“To the dungeon with him,” rang the fierce  
command ;  
“Out of my sight, or I shall stain my sword  
With his vile blood, and cheat the hangman’s  
cord.”

They took him thence fearless and blithe and  
bold,  
And strangled him in prison before the day ;  
Sweet Ghismond waited till her heart grew cold,  
And wept the long and lonely night away  
Because he came not ; on the earth he lay  
With blackened face turned to the dawn-lit sky ;—  
Ah, what can lovely Ghismond now but die ?

At the first light the wretched Tancred came  
Unto his daughter.—“Kiss me not,” said he ;  
“O, golden head weighed down with sin and  
shame—  
O, rosebud lips polluted shamfully—  
O, best-loved child, my life because of thee  
Is all grown worthless, and I loathe the sun—  
Hear now, and shrink to hear what thou hast done.

“Thou hast mixed thy royal blood with blood most  
base,  
Making a menial thy paramour ;  
Thou hast marred mine eve of life with foul dis-  
grace,  
My happiness is done, my peace is o’er,  
And I can raise my head ’mong men no more ;  
I gave thee life, and all my love I gave,  
Thou bringest me with sorrow to the grave.”

“My father,” said she, “for thy grief I grieve,  
For what thou call’st my shame I here praise  
God ;  
Menial or no menial, I believe  
A man more royal than Guiscard ne’er trod.  
Hast thou slain him ?—then turn on me thy rod ;  
If thou hast shed his blood mine also shed,  
For I will live no more when he is dead.

“Thy silken courtiers and thy puppet lords  
Thou and the tailor mad’st—if men they be—  
Guiscard God knighted, not with tap of swords  
On shoulder-knots, and ‘Rise Sir Knight,’ as ye,  
But with great Nature’s own nobility  
Of soul and heart. Do with me as thou wilt;  
If guilt there were then mine was all the guilt.

“Yet spare Guiscard—to see my face no more—  
To live in banishment far, far away.  
O, slay him not!—Think what life hath in store  
For one so young before his dying day!  
Me shalt thou have to manacle or slay;—  
Thou gavest me life—’tis little joy to live;  
What made life lovely, that did Guiscard give.”

“It is well done” he said—“’tis worn this heart  
That has these many years been thine alone,  
It serves no longer—’tis a noble part  
To break the battered shell when thou hast  
grown  
To have a suppler armour of thine own.  
My heart ’gainst Guiscard’s”—sudden brake his  
voice—  
“Now thou hast made, and thou shalt have thy  
choice.”

And straightway went he forth and gave command

That they from Guiscard's corpse the heart  
should tear ;

In a golden cup he sent it to her hand,

With message what she lovèd most was there :

"Too truly spake my spirit of despair.

Yet, O lost love !" she cried, "a fitting shrine

Is this rich cup for such a heart as thine !

"In all the world there beats no heart like this,

Nor shall again now it is still for aye,

And emptied of its love and cold to kiss ;

How fast I felt it throb when here it lay

Upon my bosom only yesterday ;

And mine throbs yet as then—O, heart of stone,

I'll still thee now since thou canst beat alone."

A deadly poison in the cup she pour'd ;

"My Guiscard, a last health I pledge to thee.

I come to join thee, O, my love—my lord—

Where'er in heaven or hell thy soul may be ;

There is no other happiness for me."

Therewith she drank, and, clasping to her breast

The heart she loved, lay down as if to rest.

And so a maiden sought the Prince and told  
With tears how that her mistress was distraught,  
And ever nursed and kissed a cup of gold  
Until they deemed her brain was overwrought.  
Then Tancred, shaken by a fearful thought,  
Hurried unto her chamber, where she lay  
Upon the bed, and nursed the cup away.

“What hast thou done, my daughter?—I re-  
pent—

Thou art even now, my child—mine only one—  
And I forgive thee.” “What, dost thou lament  
So soon this deed that thou thyself hast done?  
Nay, *I* forgive *thee*. Child, thou now hast none;  
I go to meet my love, Guiscard,” she cried,  
And pressing his heart to her own she died.

Thus ended both their pleasure and their pain,  
As all men’s pain and pleasure end ere long;  
And in one grave Prince Tancred laid the twain;  
“Love is a king than earthly kings more strong,  
And I,” he said, “will no more do him wrong,  
Lest when I die I see not Mary’s face,  
Nor God’s bright throne, nor gain the happy  
place.”



Now, for the souls of these two lovers dead,  
And for all Christian souls, I pray you pray ;  
May we meet coming Death with no more dread,  
And love as well and die as true as they.  
Sung is my song, there is no more to say :  
Our Lady give them peace now all is done,  
And save us all and bring us to her Son.

3363.

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## THE JOURNEYS' END.

## 1.

THE old man chirps on the settle,  
    Cheerily chirpeth he,  
Tells the old tales to his wife,  
Says he's been happy in life,  
And boasts of his youthful mettle  
    To the grandson on his knee.

He was a gay young fellow,  
    Loved by the lasses all;  
He has had frolic and fun,  
And now it is over and done,  
Age hath but made him mellow,  
    Ripe and ready to fall.

## 2.

The old man watches the shadows,  
    Silently watches them grow:  
His wife lies under the mould,  
And the old tales rest untold;  
And the children play in the meadows,  
    And the young men reap and sow.

## 3.

The old man preaches and prosés,  
He cowers o'er the fire and mourns ;  
His life grows joyless and dim ;  
Nobody listens to him ;  
And youth is wreathing its roses,  
And manhood plaiting its thorns.

He whimpers the world is dreary ;  
His heart is heavy and sad ;  
Would God he might join his wife !  
He has had no pleasure in life ;  
And now he is sick and weary,  
And men and women are bad.

There is always much to fret him ;  
It's sad to live and to see  
How wicked the whole world grows !  
They wish him dead he knows—  
And the children all forget him,  
Or cannot let him be.

What are the young folk doing ?  
They are over merry and bold,  
They used to be sober and staid,  
They are sadly changed he's afraid ;  
They are dancing and kissing and wooing,  
Working and getting gold.

They seem to have too much leisure,  
He had to slave for his bread :  
Nought's as it used to be,  
They all know better than he ;  
He is only spoiling their pleasure—  
He creeps away to bed.

## 4.

The old man smiles in his slumber,  
At morn he doth not wake;  
He lies with a tranquil brow,  
Happy and peaceful now,  
Free from all care and cumber,  
In the sleep no morn shall break.

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## ACROSS THE RIVER.

*Dedicated to the Memory of EBENEZER JONES, Author of  
"Studies of Sensation and Event."*

THOU knewest all ! the strenuous endeavour,  
The hope, the fear, the passion, and the pain—  
The wild unrest that urges forward ever—  
The bonds, the bits, and bridles that restrain ;  
Thou, having wings, didst wear through life a  
chain !  
O pale my brother, from Life's roaring strand  
I send thee tears and love across Death's river ;  
I, who have tracked thy footprints in Time's sand  
And o'er thy living pages, was most fain  
To clasp thy living hand.

A Titan chained, his chains and chainers scorning  
For ever—though the vulture tore his breast—  
With wide undaunted eyes that met the morning,  
And brow that would have worn the conqueror's  
crest.  
O, sorely tortured heart, and kindest !

Hardly entreated brother !—fearless, strong—  
And thine own griefs alone of all unmourning ;  
O, free for ever now from woe and wrong,  
    In the great mother's bosom take thy rest,  
    And slumber deep and long.

Thy suffering all is o'er—thou wilt not waken,  
    Nor shall my singing lull thy dreamless head ;  
And that high heart shall never more be shaken  
    At all the bitterness, and shame, and dread,  
    Wherewith man's table hath by man been  
    spread

On this our earth ; nor shalt thou ever more,  
In words that burn, mourn all high aims forsaken  
For lust of gold ; thy suffering is o'er ;  
    But thou yet speakest, brother, being dead,  
    And still thy song doth soar.

Still rings the clarion of thy exultation  
    Over all beauty of body and of soul,  
And still the trumpet of thy indignation  
    Shatters the close air like the thunder's roll.  
    Fearless, and loving fearlessly the whole,  
And hating fearlessly, I hear thee now,  
As they heard not of thine own generation,  
Who yoked a wingèd horse to drag a plough,  
    And 'stead of laurel and of aureole  
    Twined thorns about thy brow.

O flower that flourished in a barren garden,  
Swept by the bitter winds of blighting creeds,  
And smitten of the frosts of faiths that harden,  
Wither and blast all blossoms, slay all seeds  
Of love or pity for poor human needs,  
Poor human wrongs and failures—from iron clods  
Didst thou draw love to live by, grace to pardon,  
Courage to loose the cords and break the rods  
Whereto they bound thee, and to curse their  
deeds,  
And to defy their gods.

Gods made in their own image, bare of beauty,  
And hating beauty, bodiless and void ;  
Ascetic voices shrieking that man's duty  
Is to renounce whate'er may be enjoyed ;  
That Love was given us to be destroyed ;  
Fair flesh to tempt us and to put to shame  
Immortal souls to be the Devil's booty ;  
Because God doomed them from the first to flame,  
That the Elect in gladness unalloyed  
May praise His holy name.

Such gods were not for thee to praise or pray to—  
Thou wouldst not owe thy soul to such as these.  
A higher heaven thou wouldst win thy way to,  
Undreamed in their fanatic fantasies.  
Thou couldst not rest in slothful selfish peace,

And watch thy fellows pass to the quenchless fire,  
And hug thy soul in safety. Had not they, too,  
All these, though heavy laden, foul with mire,  
Like beasts of burden, souls that could not cease,  
But must fall or aspire?

And thy heart sank awhile as gazing round thee,  
Thou saw'st the world one gory battle-field;  
Then thou didst struggle with the chains that  
bound thee,  
And long for knightly spurs, and spear, and  
shield,  
Feeling thy strength, and seeing half-revealed  
Visions of glory never to be won;  
For that cursed city mill to powder ground thee,  
Bone, brain, and sinew—hope or help was none.  
Yet, brave one, thou didst neither cry nor yield,  
Nor flee till life was done.

Though the world's howl rang in thy ears like  
thunder,  
Drowning thy songs, though critics snarled and  
bayed;  
Though like the Spartan thou concealed'st under  
Thy garment a fierce beast that on thee preyed;  
Though harnessed captive to the car of Trade,—  
Our modern Juggernaut—yea, though at last



Body and soul of thee were torn in sunder  
By sorrow and sickness, thou till life was past  
Remained'st quick to succour, strong to aid,  
And more than conqueror wast.

Too late alike my praises and my pity ;  
Thou sleepest soundly, it is well with thee.  
But the wind brings the hoarse voice of the city  
Across the darkening fields to-night to me,  
Like the dull thunder of a distant sea  
When the tide tramples inland, and meseems  
I, piping here alone my mournful ditty,  
Or dredging there with men Pactolian streams,  
Am utterly one strong soul in sympathy  
With thee and with thy dreams.

I shall not lie beneath a cloudless heaven  
What time the great sun blazes in the blue,  
Body and spirit to supineness given,  
Feeling the summer drench my whole being  
through,  
But with the birds' songs thine shall haunt me  
too.  
When on Love's living pillow rests my head,  
And Love and I for victory have striven,  
Then with thy song shall Love be vanquishèd,  
And with our myrtle we thy grave will strew,  
And give thee praise, O Dead !

But most when burns the heart at man's oppression,  
    sion,

    The omnipotence of gold, the racks and chains  
Of custom and convention, the transgression  
    That is rewarded—the foul wrong that reigns,—

    O then thy resonant voice shall thrill my veins  
And steel my sinews to resist and dare—  
To weary man's hard heart with intercession,  
To scale the utmost heights of heaven with prayer,  
    To fight the day through—yea, though daylight  
    waned,

    To rest not neither spare.

Thy muse was silenced ere had come the sweetness  
    ness

    And the clear calm of strength and power serene ;  
But she was shod with fire and winged with fleet-  
    ness,

    And clothed with courage, and the rest had  
    been.

Yea, men had kneeled to her and crowned her  
    queen,

    And writ thy name high up among thy peers—  
The lords of song ; but Fate denied completeness,  
And the blind fury with the abhorred shears

    Cut thy life's thread, and the grave hid unseen  
    The promise of thy years.

So work inscrutable the giant Forces,  
Making and marring even as they will ;  
We cannot guide the planets in their courses,  
Nor yet by faith can move the smallest hill.  
We know not if the gods be good or ill,  
Lovely or hateful, only this we know,  
That we know nothing—neither ends nor sources  
Of all Life's streams, nor whence nor where they  
flow,  
Nor yet why these their tedious miles fulfil,  
Those to swift darkness go.

We fools and blind can only ease with weeping  
The o'er-tried hearts that else our wrongs would  
break ;  
Or with vain comfort, *Lo, these dead are sleep-*  
*ing,*  
*And in the Morning Land they all shall wake.*  
Oh, vain our longing, vain the moan we make !  
We shall not change what is—be still—be  
brave—  
Some souls we know of those gone past our keep-  
ing  
Gods could not bend nor demons could deprave ;  
Who have passed through life unspotted, for  
whose sake  
We dare defy the grave.

One such wast thou, whom failure, sickness,  
trouble,

All ills that Fate could work, left kind and  
strong,

Gentle and true, whose praise does therefore double  
The best reward that can be won by song.

Thou victor in the old grim fight life-long !

A greener crown I deem is thine than theirs  
Whose song is soap wherewith to blow Fame's  
bubble ;

Who sit like gods above mankind's dull cares,  
Saying : "*We are great—let earth go right or  
wrong,*

*We list not how it fares.*"

They have sipped the wisdom of all lands and ages  
Till their brains reel and they grow drunk  
thereon ;

They have wandered by Cephissus with the sages,

They have trod the haunted slopes of Helicon

With singing shadows beautiful and wan,

Till the live Present seems common and unclean,

Its ways and works unmeet for poets' pages,

Though yet its skies are blue, its fields are green,

And Life, and Death, and Love, and Hate whirl  
on

Its skies and fields between.

They cleave clear air, fine birds of smoothest  
feather;

Sunward sublime on rhythmic wings they  
soar;

Others in storm and darkness and wild weather,  
Black clouds above, below the sea's hoarse  
roar,

With draggled plumage hardly win to shore;  
The sea gulfs many; some few reach the land,  
And little breath have they to sing together—  
Poor wave-worn wanderers on a barren strand,  
Finding for all reward the journey o'er,  
Their graves dug in the sand.

So sleepest thou in peace, life's tempest over;  
And now, indeed, it matters not to thee  
Whether blown sea-sand thy poor corpse may  
cover,

Or tons of sculptured ponderous porphyry.  
From care, and passion, and desire set free,  
At rest, above all blame, beyond all praise,  
And chainless evermore, O thou true lover  
Of all things good and true through all thy  
days,

Too late we scatter 'neath thy cypress tree—  
Too late, our laurel sprays.

Twined round thy living brow they had stirred with  
pleasure,  
Quickening the pulses of thy eager heart ;  
O prize above all others—hard-won treasure  
No gold can buy—unpriced upon the mart !  
O public crown, the sole reward of art !  
O good which all we worship more than gold,  
Or love, or life, and covet overmeasure ;  
'Thou may'st make whole the sick, make young the  
old,  
But the stopped pulses thou canst never start  
Nor warm the brow death-cold.

Therefore our praise is vain, our labour bootless,  
For this our brother is at peace and dead.  
He hath found an end of woe, of high hopes fruit-  
less,  
Of fierce ambition, aye unsatiated,  
Of hope with snakes for fishes, stones for  
bread,  
Of fear with ceaseless sting and gnawing lust,  
Of life whose joys and woes alike are rootless,  
Of long heart-sickness, weariness, mistrust.  
He hath found an end of all. Rest, rest tired  
head,  
Dust moulder unto dust.

Sleep in the eternal night that knows no morrow,  
No sick grey wretched dawn with tearful eyes,  
Nor dreams that torture the fagged brain and  
borrow

The shapes made monstrous of day's miseries.  
Sleep on for ever, there is nought but dies.  
We too shall sleep the healing sleep with thee ;  
We too shall find an end of pain and sorrow ;  
And this sweet knowledge makes us bear to be.  
Kind Death shall free us—Death more blessed  
thrice  
Than Immortality.

Roll on, O rapid and resistless river,  
Outward, still outward, to the Sea and Night.  
O tideless tide of Time that turneth never,  
Whereon our poor lives gleam as foam-flakes  
white,  
Bear us out swiftly to the Infinite,  
To lose in that vast ocean's heave and swell  
These selves of ours for ever and for ever,  
Happy if we have left behind some spell  
Like his to move men ! Spirit true and bright,  
Hail, brave one, and Farewell.

## TO LOUISE CHANDLER MOULTON.

*(With Verses "On the Hill-side.")*

GO forth, O little flower of song,  
To her who found you fair ;  
After a winter black as night  
I plucked you when Spring's smile brought light,  
And April winds were blithe and strong,  
And Hope was in the air.

Poor stray of Autumn left to Spring—  
I send you forth to be  
'Twixt us a pledge of happier hours,—  
Yea, tho' she hath far fairer flowers  
Alway at hand for gathering,  
Go forth undoubtingly.

For thou hast gained a happy meed,  
And wert thou weed or worse,  
With her praise for a light above,  
Many should find thee fair and love,  
Tho' not for thine own sake indeed,  
But her sake, O my verse.



Be flower or weed, and live or die,  
To me thou art more dear,  
Than all thy sister flowerets are,  
O herald of the single star  
That rose upon the hell-black sky  
Of my most hopeless year.

---

## ON THE HILL-SIDE.

DO you remember the autumn nights  
On the side of the misty hill,  
Where by the wood we used to stand  
Long and lovingly hand in hand,  
While afar in the valley the city lights  
Made the mist sparkle and thrill?

And the dead leaves drifted wearily down,  
And lay as if glad to rest;  
And the year lay dying, weak and still,  
On the side of the misty autumn hill,  
But there in the valley the heart of the town  
Throbbled in its feverish breast.

Like a lower world to our eyes it seemed  
'Neath its cloudy pall of care,  
Loud with unlovely strifes and jars,  
Lighted only by lower stars  
Than those that over us blazed and beamed  
In a heaven of lucid air.

Do you remember it now, my dear,  
On the side of the misty hill  
Where you lie so quiet, all day, all night,  
Through summer and winter and dark and light,  
From day to day and from year to year  
Where you lie so cold and still?

Do you see the mist flash and quiver and throb  
With the stifled storm of the lights?  
Do you feel the pulse of the city's heart  
Beating with feverish stop and start,  
Or hear in the trees the sad winds' sob  
Through the rainy autumn nights?

Nay, not a sight not a sound, my love,  
Comes to you where you lie,  
With sleep in your eyes and peace in your breast,  
Of all the city's weak wild unrest;  
But I am a part of the heart thereof,  
A waif in the whirlpool, I.

And I know 'tis a lower world as we deemed  
With lower stars for its lights;  
And I fill my days with its stir and strife,  
And see the light no more in my life  
Of the stars that over us blazed and beamed  
In the long-gone autumn nights.

But I wait for the day to come, my dear,  
    When I shall rise and go  
To be with you on the misty hill,  
To sleep, to have peace, to rest and be still,  
The roar of the city no more to hear  
    And its sin no more to know.

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## THE HERETIC-MARTYR.

I HAD struggled all day and failed,—to think  
I should win at last,  
When I deemed the battle was ended, and the  
chance of victory past!

When the fight that had raged so long was all  
grown dim as a dream,  
And the trumpet's clamour was silenced and  
darkened the armour's gleam;

When the shield of my faith was shattered, and  
broken the sword of my trust,  
And the enemy trampled o'er me where I lay face  
down in the dust.

Who could have thought I should rise, as I rise in  
triumph now,  
Clothed in the victor's purple with laurels upon  
my brow,

And behold them scattered in fight who erstwhile  
over me trod,  
And feel on my breast truth's breastplate, in my  
bosom the peace of God.

For I feel I am surely safe—yea I know the danger  
is o'er,

'They burn me to-morrow at daybreak, they will  
not tempt me more.

It is all too late to be lost, if I would be 'tis all  
too late—

'They have solemnly cursed me and cast me off,  
they have shut hell's gate,

'Thinking it heaven's; and now at last when the  
life-long fight is done,

I have an hour of peace ere dawn to think of the  
victory won.

'I mind the battle's beginning in the old days long  
gone by,

'When my boy's heart found too early that the  
God of the priests was a lie.

And each truth snapt as I grasped it, till within  
me and without

Was only clamour and chaos and the darkness of  
endless doubt.

I mind the stress of the storm, when suddenly  
round me rose

From the ambush whence they had watched me a  
thousand treacherous foes.

Cowards who work in the dark the stumbling feet  
to enmesh,  
Shame and desire and terror and the merciless  
lusts of the flesh ;

And Love and her brother Hate with their black  
incestuous brood,  
Some sapping my spirit's strength, some draining  
my body of blood.

And the frightened air one roar, and the echoing  
sky one fire,  
Till I felt my heart grow fainter, my muscles  
slacken and tire,

And the storm of sound grew quiet, and a pall of  
darkness fell,  
And I swooned to waken captive to the powers of  
Death and Hell.

I mind the years of my bondage, the foul and  
horrible dream,  
Swine and satyrs around me and Tophet's reek and  
steam :

Till they cast me a worn-out servant from the  
fiery realm of Lust,  
And I woke to satiation and the sickness of  
disgust,

To an empty earth and heaven, to a life that lay  
before,

Like a blank and limitless desert or a sea without  
sail or shore ;

Nor ever a goal before me, nor friends, nor hopes,  
nor fears,

But I and my shadow only toiling through age-long  
years ;

With memory turned to a vulture eating my heart  
unseen,

And a waste wind moaning ever of the things that  
might have been,

And a longing for Death that came not, a loathing  
of Life that stayed—

A longing that nothing banished, a loathing that  
nought allayed.

And a scorn of the madman's chatter, the irony  
bitter and grim—

“ God can save to the uttermost all that come unto  
Him ;

“ His mercy endureth for ever, with wrong ye may  
fill you full—

Though your sins be as scarlet they shall be white-  
as wool.”



Can ye cleanse a soul with water and wash out  
sins as a stain

That have grown into flesh and spirit and are part  
of my blood and brain ?

My virtues were foisted on me—were never wholly  
mine own—

My sins were flesh of my flesh, my sins were bone  
of my bone.

And there grew a clamour about me of sheep who  
followed the priests,

This man denieth our God, nor heedeth our fasts  
and feasts,

This man jeers at our worship, mocketh our  
heaven and hell,

Saith that our preachers snare us, and have only  
lies to sell ;

Let him die the heretic's death ! Let him burn in  
the public square !

To-morrow at daybreak, said I,—the city will all  
be there.

They summoned me to their council, they wove  
me their cursed wiles ;

There was greed in their cheeks, and lust in their  
eyes, and deceit in their smiles,

And they tempted me priestly fashion with the  
good they had to give,  
“Acknowledge us now,” they urged me, “bow to  
our God and live.

“Think what thou wilt but speak not, it is easy to  
live a lie ;”  
And I cursed the pestilent vermin, and defied  
their God and die.

And lo, as I spake the words that doomed me to  
death, there fell  
On my life a light out of heaven to lighten the  
blackness of hell.

And the shadow of darkness vanished that had  
lain so long on my soul,  
And the black and bitter past was rolled away like  
a scroll ;

And the weariness cleared like a mist from the  
face of the smiling hours,  
And the deathward path before me laughed with a  
light of flowers.

For the idol of Self was shattered as at the  
thunder's stroke,  
And over its blasted fragments the splendour of  
morning broke.

The morning that hideous idol had veiled from  
my eyes so long,

That touched my forehead with fire, and my lips  
with Memnon's song,

And showed me the way of peace wherein I was  
fain to tread,

And whereby I might enter unshamed the holy  
halls of the Dead,

And sleep with the sinless sleepers, sinless and  
pure as they,

The stain of my wretched life purged by the fire  
away

With the worthless body it clung to, and I by  
burning and ban

Seal me for ever and ever on the side of freedom  
and man,

On the side of all the oppressed, all weak and  
down-trodden things,

'Gainst the lying priests and their gods, the courts  
and their bloody kings.

Wherefore my heart is light and my spirit is not  
afraid,

For I shall not pass to the vengeance of a fiend  
that men have made,

And worship, and call it God; but e'en as a  
drop of rain

That falls alone to the earth, but rises ere long  
again,

And becometh a part of the cloud, so shall I pass  
and be

Reabsorbed into life eternal, a part of the air and  
the sea,

And the light and the night and the blossom  
and the insect that feedeth thereon,

But never again these atoms be brought together  
as one.

All hail to the One Physician who could cure my  
soul's disease,

Praised be the only God who could give me rest  
and peace.

Praised be the Great Deliverer! Praised be the  
King of Kings!

Praised be great Death that cometh with healing  
on his wings!

Praised be the foes who gave me when hope had  
so long gone by

The heavenly help of their hate, and so goodly a  
death to die!

For lo in the ages to come the chosen children  
of light,

Heretics, rebels, and outcasts, shall brace their  
souls for the fight

By the telling of this day's story, and the fire  
that consumeth me

Shine as a terror to princes and priests whereso-  
ever they be.

Hark! a hand at the bolt, and a gathering roar  
and hum,

And the tramp of the soldiers' feet, and the  
hurrying roll of the drum,

And I pass to die into life, and I go forth chained  
and free

In the glorious blood-red dawn of a day I shall  
not see.

---

## LIGHT LOVE.

FOR a little or a long time,  
A life-time or a song-time,  
How shall Love endure Love betwixen you and  
me ?  
Who shall say ? we dare not !  
Still we laugh and spare not,  
And still we kiss and care not whatever things may  
be.

For years go on and over,  
And lover loosens lover,  
And lives that love once sheltered, lie bare to wind  
and rain ;  
From out a golden measure  
We drink the wine of pleasure,  
To taste the lees at leisure of bitterness and pain.

For you and me it may be,  
Ere long shall that grim day be

When all the wine is drunken, and but the lees  
remain.

Then not a moment stay, sweet,  
But cast the cup away, sweet,  
The dregs—the dregs are they sweet that either  
should complain?

Tie youth and truth together  
In how so strong a tether,  
Yet they shall break the bondage, and each from  
other fly.

Let no vow pass between us,  
The gods from bondage screen us !  
We worship laughing Venus ; her girdle be our  
tie !

Ours is no wild beginning  
Of loving and of sinning,  
We have known them all aforetime each passion  
and desire.

And all were sweet as this is,  
With days and nights of kisses,  
Tho' no flame leaps or hisses where once was  
nought but fire.

Yet tho' thus far we're free, love,  
A bitter thing may be, love,

lees

And this light t  
chain ;

And so

her

Sick we

Without a light

'Tis wel

'Tis well

a

'Tis well to love

much ;

And ten

Are best

And here's a song  
touch.



## THE BALLAD OF THE HAUNTED GLADE.

I WAS brave and young and my kin among,  
    Their joy, their hope, their pride,  
I yearned for strife and a larger life,  
    I knew the world was wide.  
I was young and brave, yet my kin looked grave,  
    Tho' they would not say me nay ;  
"Go forth," they said, "God guard thy head,  
    God save thy soul alway."  
I thought 'tis ill, but I drink my fill  
    Of the wide world's stored delight—  
Of pleasure and wine, and of love divine,  
    Of tourney and of fight,  
And blazon with fame our ancient name,  
    And prove me God's own knight.  
My kinsmen cried, "The world is wide,"  
    Wagged each a snowy head,  
They said "Beware, there is many a snare ;  
    Beware, beware !" they said.  
They blessed me then those grave old men,  
    And I laughed and turned and fled.

I sallied forth, and the wind blew north,  
But Spring had breathed on the lea,  
And over the sod my charger trod,  
As though he was proud of me;  
The villagers' cheers rang in my ears,  
And I bowed right graciously.  
Merry and gay I rode away,  
Under a gladsome sky,  
There rang in my brain a martial strain,  
My heart with hope beat high ;  
And Spring was rife with the pride of life,  
And promise of victory ;  
And birds made love in the trees above,  
And triumphed o'er winter done,  
Singing unseen in the golden green  
Of leaves shot through with sun ;  
My shield flashed bright in the joyous light—  
I deemed its blazon won.

In the forest shade that night I prayed  
To God with high desire,  
“Try me,” I cried, “as silver is tried,  
Yea, prove my soul with fire.  
I am Thy knight, I am strong to smite, .  
Strong in Thy cause to die !”

And methought there swept, or ever I slept,  
O'erhead a mingled cry,  
As of revellers shouting where feast is kept,  
For some great victory.

I woke, and lo, the forest did glow  
With a strange unearthly light,  
And a weird wild song, most sweet and strong,  
Swept down the aisles of night.  
My charger heard, for his ears he stirred,  
And then he stirred no more ;  
And I grasped my sword, and prayed the Lord,  
As I had not prayed before.  
The birds o'erhead seemed daft with dread,  
That wondrous song to hear ;  
Through the trembling grass each insect fled,  
As the strange wild voice drew near ;  
And my strong young heart like a girl's did start,  
Yea, pale I grew and cold.  
And there came a maid down the woodland glade,  
With hair of the sun's own gold.  
Its wondrous light made the forest bright  
As a summer sun did shine ;  
Her white throat stirred with the song I heard,  
That thrilled my veins like wine.

I laughed at my fear when she drew near,  
And her beauty smote my sight,  
An angel of heaven I deemed her, given  
Unto God's chosen knight.  
O strange and wild was the smile she smiled,  
And my sword fell at my feet;  
Her soft arms wound my body round,  
Her lips to mine were sweet;  
And at the bliss of that burning kiss,  
At touch of that shining hair,  
With a great desire my blood took fire,  
And I scarce heard in the air  
The night wind's sigh, as it wandered by  
With a murmur of "Beware!"  
And the toil and pain that were passed seemed vain,  
And the world without too wide,  
And one hour's rest on her perfect breast,  
Worth life and all beside;  
And a man's own soul seemed a beggar's dole,  
Wherewith to win such a bride.  
Aye, well I know, had I seen this woe,  
God opening my eyes,  
From above come thunder, or hell oped under,  
I had done none otherwise,  
Than there in the deep and eerie sleep  
Of that forest of mysteries.

Through the magical light of that one sweet  
night,  
In the haunted glade we lay ;  
But the lady paled, and the strange light failed,  
At the first faint beam of day ;  
And then, with a scream that shattered my dream,  
She rose and vanished away.

I oped my eyes with a wild surprise ;  
Methought I had long been dead,  
For the green turf broke either side as I woke,  
And struggled to raise my head ;  
From the broken mould the fat worms rolled,  
They had thrived and fattened there ;  
I wrecked the house of the mailed woodlouse,  
And a wild bird flew from my hair ;  
Over my face in the noisome place,  
Insects most foul did flee,  
I lay like a stone in the wood alone,  
And the lichen covered me.  
I cried aloud from my earthy shroud,  
None answered though I cried ;  
But I wrenched me free in my agony,  
And sought for my gold-haired bride.  
Close to my hand lay a rusted brand,  
And a charger's bones beside.

I searched each spot, but I found her not,  
I found her never again ;  
When I called her name but an echo came,  
And plashing of dreary rain ;  
And I grew too weak any more to seek,  
But I wandered on and on,  
Till I left the gloom of the forest of doom,  
Weeping her dead and gone.  
I stayed to look in a wayside brook,  
I saw no gallant knight—  
But a corpse, re-risen from its foul prison,  
Earth-soiled, dull-eyed and white.  
I journeyed back, and the trees were black,  
Their branches all were bare,  
Through the woods there rang, with their clash and  
clang,  
Winter's cry in the air ;  
When I came again to the haunts of men,  
There were none who knew me there.  
My kin were laid in the churchyard shade,  
From their hearts grew many a weed ;  
Each carven cross was covered with moss,  
Their names were hard to read ;  
And I knew my day had passed away,  
And my life was ruined and done,  
No spring for me any more should be,  
Nor any summer or sun ;

For the phantom Maid of the Haunted Glade-  
Has wrought her curse on me ;  
But to God I pray, both night and day,  
For Death to set me free.  
Too weak for fight, and no more a knight,  
I kneel before the Cross ;  
I have been tried as silver is tried,  
The fire has proved me dross.  
By my first foe I was smitten low,  
With my own pride distraught ;  
Vanquished I fell, and struck no blow,  
Was conquered ere I fought ;  
Proved in the fire at my vain desire,  
My soul consumed to nought.  
I will go to my kin, and purge my sin,  
In the dark soul-healing grave,  
When God shall take, for His mercy's sake,  
The life in wrath He gave ;  
For never a man in this life's span,  
Shall save his soul from hell,  
Who has met the Maid of the Haunted Glade,  
And fallen under her spell.  
But God above of His endless love,  
To such these words hath given—  
“After thousand years of travail and tears,  
Ye shall serve my saints in heaven.”

Wherefore I wait at Death's grim gate,  
To hear its hinges move,  
That through long pain I at last may gain  
God's pardon and Christ's love.  
Here all men shun the Accursèd One,  
And cross themselves, and pray,  
When I pass by, and the maidens fly,  
And the children leave their play.  
God may forgive, but while I live,  
Never I know will they.  
And oft I hear with a deadly fear,  
Though I know them a cursèd lie,  
Words raising a doubt I can cast not out,  
*Men say I shall never die;*  
But in age and shame bear this wretched frame,  
Thorough all Eternity.  
The young and old are laid in the mould,  
They slumber alike in peace;  
The fair and brave go down to the grave,  
Their pleasures and sorrows cease;  
I—only I—O, my God Most High!  
I—only I—die not!  
Wilt thou torture indeed through Eternity?  
Or am I indeed forgot?



## A NOCTURNE AT TWILIGHT.

THE broken lights flow in—  
    The broken lights flow in—  
    And the notes flow out, flow out;  
Life with its sorrow and sin,  
    Death with its endless doubt;  
And the same old weary din  
    Goes on in the street without.

But the soul of the twilight sings—  
The soul of the twilight sings—  
    And I hear the din no more  
But a sound as of laughing springs;  
    A murmur of waves on the shore,  
And upward on rhythmic wings  
    Doth the mounting melody soar.

The rippling notes arise—  
The rippling notes arise—  
    Meseems somewhere afar  
In depths of sunset skies  
    Shines many a silver star  
O'er a sea that moans and sighs  
    To be where the pale stars are.

But the mounting melody fails—  
The mounting melody fails—  
    Or ever the goal is won ;  
The starshine sickens and pales  
    Over the sunken sun ;  
The twilight alone prevails,  
    But the twilight's soul is gone.

And the broken lights flow in—  
The broken lights flow in—  
    And the white hands leave the keys ;  
So, ere they well begin,  
    End all life's melodies ;  
And again arises the din  
    Outside that shall never cease.

---

## A LAST LETTER.

I COME from wandering long  
In paths of woe and wrong,  
Once more, with one more song,  
To sing to thee.  
Thou who took'st all my lays  
Of worship once and praise,  
Thou who in these last days  
Art lost to me.

And tho' I sing again,  
I sing not now as then,  
When hearts were young and when  
Love made earth heaven ;  
There sounds within my ears  
The voice of awful years,  
I sing as one who hears  
His sentence given.

Death, death in some brief span ;  
Yet strives as strive he can  
To bear him as a man  
Till death shall come ;

To face each mocking eye,  
To climb the scaffold high,  
Unshaken, and to die  
Defiant, dumb.

Yea, this at least man may  
At ending of his day,  
Tread with firm steps his way,  
And shrink no more ;  
And no more mourn or weep,  
For rest is near, and sleep  
Under the darkness deep  
That lies before.

There all the wrong is done,  
And blame and praise are one ;  
His shame no more the sun  
Shall show to men.  
Silent and still he lies  
With quiet closed eyes ;  
He shall not dream or rise,  
Or sin again.

And I—I am but dead,  
Tho' heart aches yet and head,  
Lo near my easeless bed  
On lightest wing

The glad birds come and go,  
Mid white and crimson snow,  
On orchard trees that grow  
    . Green with the spring.

I watch them all day long,  
And listening to their song,  
The woe, the loss, the wrong,  
    Fade far away ;  
Round me fast falls the night,  
But they taste full delight ;  
They revel in the bright  
    And joyous day.

I see the dawn of spring,  
But e'er its evening  
Nor bird nor song nor wing,  
    Nor e'en thy tread,  
Nor love nor hate nor lust,  
Nor man nor God, I trust,  
Shall stir again my dust,  
    Or wake me, dead.

I have done ill I know,  
And lying lone and low,  
Backward my mind will go  
    To olden days.

When thou wast all mine own,  
And the ill to come unknown,  
Yea, lying low and lone,  
I see thy face.

I have done ill to thee,  
Lost love, because of me  
Thy life was doomed to be  
Of love bereft;  
And to myself done ill,  
With wild and headstrong will,  
And drunk of life my fill,  
Death's dregs are left.

These, too, I drink ere long  
And finish life and wrong,  
Yet sing one last poor song  
Before I go;  
Not craving thy pardon, dear,  
But singing, Be of cheer,  
Dying he lieth here  
Who wrought thee woe.

Dying, alone and young,  
A stranger folk among;  
Dying, his songs half sung,  
His name unknown.

Feeling death's bitterest sting,  
Dying at dawn of spring,  
When life fills everything,  
Dying alone.

Thou art avenged and free.  
Lost love, go forth and be  
Happy, nor think of me,  
Nor of the past.  
Only know this that I,  
When came my time to die,  
Lost love, thought lovingly  
Of thee at last.

---

## AT HAWTHORNDEN.

WHERE the bard of Hawthornden  
Wandered once with rare old Ben,  
Up the lovely leafy glen  
In the summer weather,  
Chance companions of a day  
Soon to part and pass away,  
Haply ne'er to meet again,  
Wandered we together.

Wandered lightly free from care,  
Both being young and one being fair,  
And summer's pomp being everywhere,  
Around, above, and under.  
Spirits of the immortal dead,  
How your words rang in my head!  
O unknown maiden with me there  
Of what thought you I wonder?



A slender form in sober guise,  
A grave sweet face, clear truthful eyes,  
Whereto sometimes demure surprise

My rhythmic raving summoned.

After we parted I was ware,  
Too late, that you were very fair,  
And full of subtle witcheries  
Worth Jonson and worth Drummond..

---

## A PICTURE.

(*Hope nursing Love*, by SIR J. REYNOLDS.)

**F**IT nurse for Love art thou,  
        Whose pictured face e'en now  
        Hath such a nameless charm.  
Were I that happy Love  
That thou dost bend above,  
    And circle with thy arm ;  
Were mine as his lips prest  
Upon thy bare sweet breast,  
    Didst thou smile on me so,  
    All future hope to dwell  
    On beds of asphodel,  
And drink ambrosia with the gods methinks I  
    could forego !  
  
Thy breast had flowers to smell  
Sweeter than asphodel ;  
    Ambrosia was thy breath,  
Delicious lips and eyes,  
There wakes a dim surprise  
That the weak soul should rise,  
    But these be food for Death.

Painter, I give thee praise  
For this fair woman's face,  
    Saved from the past for me.  
Time thou hast vanquished here,  
    But his revenge is near,  
Gaze and desire for aye, she will not care or see..

There lurks a pang in this,  
Those lips can never kiss,  
    Those eyes look love again ;  
That bosom fall or rise  
With laughter or with sighs,  
    With pleasure or with pain ;  
But still for ever there,  
Thou, so divinely fair,  
    Shalt yet possess the power  
To set the blood on fire  
With exquisite desire,  
And envy of that boy face-deep in such a flower.

---

## THE MARSHAL'S TRIUMPH.

Thus achievement lacks a gracious somewhat.

BROWNING.

I MIND when I was a beardless boy,  
And my fortunes were low and my hopes were  
high,  
I said, Could I have but a day of joy—  
One only day ere I come to die,  
And so bid pleasure a last good-bye.  
Not a single moment in thought I'd lose,  
I am so certain what I should choose.

I would come a victor from fields afar  
Back to the land I had saved from the foe,  
There at the end of the glorious war  
Through the streets of the city in triumph go,  
With banners above and flowers below,  
And a surging and shouting crowd around,  
The air one tempest of joyous sound,

The houses one flame of crimson and gold,  
The windows ablaze with the starriest eyes,  
While the joy-bells rung, and my war-drums  
rolled,

But both were drowned as I came in the cries  
That hailed me with names of my victories,  
And the vanquished foes and the taken towns,  
And my carriage was piled with the laurel crowns

That were rained upon me all down the line  
Of my slow advance through the bellowing  
crowd,

And the rose-hung fountains were spouting wine  
In the public squares, whence more deep and  
loud

Rose the welcoming roar, and I bowed and  
bowed ;—

And there my breath having failed me, I  
Left myself bowing most pitilessly.

And he whom I spoke to shook his head,  
And laughed at my eager face and speech,  
Then spake some word of the nameless Dead,  
Whom joy of triumph could never reach,  
Foes and friends huddled each by each  
On those fields of victory far away ;  
But I heeded little what he might say.

I had fallen in love with my own vain dream,  
I brooded over it oft and long,  
And fame and glory were all my theme ;  
To be fêted in life and embalmed in song  
After death, to be great whether right or  
wrong,  
To be some way raised o'er the herd of men—  
These were the hopes made my whole life then.

But to be as one of the common crowd,  
To eat, sleep, labour till death, and lie  
In the dust forgotten before my shroud  
Had time to moulder—let life go by  
Like a mere dull worm or a mere bright fly,  
And call this living ! Great Gods, I said,  
After such a life I could rest not dead !

Like a bridled charger I snuffed the strife,  
The sound of the shouting was in my ears,  
I stood at the edge of the storm of life,  
Heard its trumpets thunder, saw flash its  
spears,  
And sickened to challenge the tardy years  
And snatch their secret and know my fate ;  
Should I die unknown, or live to be great ?

And free at last to the fray, I sprang  
My war-cry "Glory," and nought beside,  
And round me the battle bellowed and rang,  
The victors were crowned and the vanquished  
died,  
And I fought from morning to eventide  
All my life's day long—now 'tis well nigh done,  
And I know too late the nothing I've won.

For, lo, my dream has come true to-day,  
The boyish longing has been attained ;  
The streets of the city with flags were gay  
(They drooped a little because it rained),  
The crowds were vast and their throats they  
strained  
In cheering me ; and my head aches yet,  
Three hours I sat in the cold and wet,

Bowing and bowing with bald head bare,  
Till my skull seemed only a brimming bowl,  
Where my brain was swimming for life, I swear,  
And time after time did I see the whole—  
Streets, crowds, and houses—heave, reel, and  
roll,  
This way and that, and was like to swoon,  
Being old and weak and exhausted soon.

And they read me speeches, Lord knows how long,  
    Poor gap-toothed dotards in robes of state,  
With a nasal twang in a low sing-song,  
    While I smiled most blandly, and cursed my  
        fate;  
And they crowned me with flowers at the city  
    gate,  
A bevy of beauties !—but there, I'm old,  
And my bones all ache and I've taken cold.

The streets are streaming with fire to-night,  
    And over the city the sky glows red,  
My name is blazoned in letters of light  
    Wherever there's space, and I lie in bed  
    And wish I were with them, those nameless.  
    Dead,  
One of the thousands who fighting fell,  
Who have earned their rest and who slumber well.

Count John may deem that I saw him not,  
    But his cursed face turned my blood to gall;  
Had he hidden himself from sight, God wot,  
    I had felt his smile through a house's wall;  
    And I prayed, and his balcony would not fall,  
Yet fell there one in a street hard by,  
And some were killed whom none wished to die.



Count John, he saith, had the right been done  
    He had filled my place and been crowned to-day,  
Saith in spite of me were the victories won,  
    For I paltered in council and shunned the fray,  
    And aught he saith there are more who say,  
For his friends are many and rich and strong,  
And I fear they shall work me ill ere long.

The King stands by him—John's wife is fair,  
    Hath a deep dark eye and an olive cheek,  
And a languorous graceful Italian air—  
    The cause of the friendship's not far to seek;  
    The King, God save him, is wondrous weak,  
Man cannot move him by force or skill,  
But a woman does with him what she will.

So John's head sprouts, if the truth be told;  
    When I die my bâton to John will go;  
And the world will roll as the world has rolled  
    Through summer to winter, from flowers to snow,  
    Till the King and John and his wife lie low  
With me—ambition and pride and lust  
In dusty darkness forgotten dust!

Crown, beauty, bâton, mere baubles then,  
Fame, power, and riches, but dreams that fade,  
And the thundered praise of a world of men  
Unheard by the wandering lonely shade.

I have won my game and the stakes are paid ;  
I count them o'er as I lie in bed,  
And, lo, as I touch it the gold turns lead.

My valet curses me from his soul  
That I keep him waking this weary night ;  
I know the rascal doth lurk and prowls,  
And note my symptoms each day to write  
To those whom my death shall much delight,  
Making them richer, my far-off heirs,  
Whom I fain would cheat, but my name is theirs.

There had been children to bear that name,  
There had been someone to kiss me now,  
But I took my choice between love and fame,  
And that choice once made is for ever, I trow.

God ! there are iron bands round my brow,  
And about my heart. O my poor lost love,  
I wrecked your life and thought nothing thereof.

But to-night avenges you. Do you see,  
From your place in heaven, me lying here,  
And the city tossing in maniac glee  
That late was ashudder with cowardly fear  
For its skin and coffers ? my murdered Dear,

Do you see the curse of my selfishness come,  
Like other curses, as men say—Home?

I am weak and giddy, my heart beats loud,  
I cannot sleep, yet I long for rest ;  
My ears are full of the roar of the crowd ;  
I have won the stakes, was my game the best ?  
A heart unloved and a life unblest,  
A laurelled brow and an hour's acclaim,  
Desolation and glory and envy and fame.

My winnings, look you !—Yea, here I lie  
Propped on my pillows and gaze away  
At the fiery flush of the far off-sky  
That pales each moment as comes the Day,  
And think, as the purple is stricken gray,  
Even so now my life's long night is done,  
My fame's glare fadeth before God's sun.


For the morn is coming, the crowd's harsh roar  
Is turned to a carol clear and strong,  
Darkness is ended and night is o'er,  
The darkness of error—the night of wrong—  
And that is the skylark's morning song,  
A resonant rapture of joy and praise  
To hail and herald this day of days.

The last that I upon earth shall see,  
For Death's hand closes over my heart,  
And I leave no creature to care for me  
In all the world ; not a tear will start  
At news of my death. I have played my part,  
I have ta'en my wage ; I would give it now  
For a hand in mine or a kiss on my brow.

A soft arm round me, a woman's eyes  
Looking love into mine as they glaze and close.  
Bah ! Better to die as the soldier dies,  
With a hundred wounds mid a hundred foes,  
To the music of cannon and ringing blows  
On the field of battle ! My sword there, ho !  
The rascal sleeps, and my voice is low.

Or else to have died, my reward complete,  
In the midst of my triumph of yesterday ;  
A crowned corpse facing each roaring street,  
None knowing my life had passed away.  
What a thrill of horror, what wild dismay,  
What a ghastly blanching of faces all,  
When they found the triumph turned funeral !

But thus to die, like a palsied dame,  
In bed and helpless, as if that I  
Were some drivelling dullard who ne'er won fame  
Nor tasted the splendour of victory  
All his poor life long ! O thus to die



Is an evil end and—My sword, I say,  
To kill myself were a nobler way !

Methinks I rave, and he will not hear ;  
And the death-gloom gathers before my eyes,  
But over the city pale and clear  
I know that a ghostly dawn doth rise,  
And the glare hath faded from out the skies ;  
While again, with a melody loud and strong,  
The soul of the lark goes up in song.

My parting soul on its wings may soar  
To the heaven of heavens where God doth  
dwell ;  
For the human love in my pride passed o'er  
I may find His mercy to save from hell.  
Lo, a great light shines, and I hear the swell  
Of a million voices—Rest, useless sword !  
Lord Jesus, save me ! Have mercy, Lord !

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## TWO YEARS AGO.

TWO years ago how I hated him !  
How I loved you two years ago !  
Now love and hatred are both grown dim,  
He's not a bad fellow, and you're so-so,  
By no means perfect, you know.

For me the beauty has faded away  
From your lips and eyes and hair,  
And though I know there are many who say  
That you were never half so fair,  
I cannot see it, or care.

And he in my eyes was a devil once,  
His death had been joy to me ;  
And now he's only a dull old dunce,  
And it's very easy to see  
There are many worse than he.

So life's bright colours Time washes gray,  
And long ere our living is done  
The sharpest distinctions have passed away,  
The colours have faded and run,  
And good and evil are one.

But, ah, there's a something life seems to lack,  
A something that gave it zest;  
I would that the old days could come back  
With their love and hate and their wild unrest,  
For, oh, they were worst and best !

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## A CRY\*

LO, I am weary of all,  
Of men and their love and their hate;  
I have been long enough Life's thrall  
And the toy of a tyrant Fate.

I would have nothing but rest,  
I would not struggle again;  
Take me now to thy breast,  
Earth, sweet mother of men.

Hide me and let me sleep,  
Give me a lonely tomb  
So close and so dark and so deep  
I shall hear no trumpet of doom.

There let me lie forgot  
When the dead at its blast are gone,  
Give me to hear it not,  
But only to slumber on.

This is the fate I crave,  
For I look to the end and see  
If there be not rest in the grave  
There will never be rest for me.

\* First published in "The Spectator,"



## A LAY SERMON.


" You're old and dim, Sir,  
And the shadow of the earth eclipsed your judgment."  
THE ELDER BROTHER.

I LIKE to hear you talk Sir; you're a poet.  
You use the English language with some skill,  
Your sentences are neat, your words well chosen.  
And more, well spoken; and when you grow  
warm,  
As you are apt to grow on slight occasion,  
There is the sort of ring I like to hear.  
The lyric lilt in all; it pleases me,  
Soothes me, would send me in due time to sleep;  
And while you talked I warrant I should dream  
Of pleasant sounds—spring's whisper in the trees,  
The summer seas' low song, the murmuring  
Of streams among the woods; and sometimes, too,  
Of the rhythmic rising of the strong west wind  
Swelling to organ-thunder thro' the aisles  
Of the autumn forest. When you ceased, Sir, I  
Should waken with a start and grunt applause  
In all sincerity. For what you mean

'Tis the old tale : you would re-make the world,  
Profiting by your predecessor's failure,  
Start it afresh quite spick and span thro' space  
To God knows where—and I should sympathise.  
But I'm too old for that, and I have known  
Too many poets who were each one bent  
Upon the self-same task, and still the world,  
The ricketty old vehicle, goes on—  
Does not break down or mend for all their rhym-  
ing.

It has carried me thus far ; will carry me  
Now to the end I think—no mighty distance—  
With more or less of comfort ; 'twould become me  
But ill to abuse it at this time of day.  
But I am old and humdrum ; you are young.  
Your mind's a stream of lava swift and fiery,  
A burning blazing headlong cataract  
That cleanses, blasts, illumines, and o'erwhelms,  
Tears down, consumes, hurls furiously to nothing  
All in its way and finds fierce pleasure in't.  
The lava of my mind has cooled long since ;  
'Twas ne'er so hot as yours ;—I am no poet—  
Now 'tis as cold and hard as any granite ;  
I think an earthquake scarce could change it  
much.

The white-hot molten current of your thought  
Flows over it and warms it pleasantly.




But when the flood has past the glow too passes,  
And lo, the granite is not changed a whit!

O yes, the world is very tolerable,  
And not so much mismanaged as you think,  
Tho' there are kings and priests and mighty men  
Ruling their betters, and dull folk with gold,  
Servants and horses and palatial dwellings,  
While God-sent genius shivers in its garret.  
Thank God I was not cursed with genius!  
I love to observe the signs of it in others,  
As doctors love to watch a strange disease,  
But nowise wish to take the patient's place.  
I say 'tis wonderful—and I rejoice  
That I am safe and sound in mind and body.  
I say the world without it would be dull—  
I'm glad 'tis not my task to liven it;  
For between you and me, in confidence,  
A man with genius does remind me much  
Of a dog with a kettle dangling at his tail.  
What noise and clatter makes he in the town!  
Men run to doors, and women peer from casements,  
And children flee in fright, and fall, and cry,  
And horses start amain, and boys pursue  
In whooping crowds. The dog does doubtless  
make,  
What in the jargon of the day men call

A "great sensation ;" but in no long time  
He runs himself to death, and lies forgotten  
By the road side with the accursèd kettle,  
The cause of all his trouble, still at last.  
So goes your man of genius—helter-skelter,  
Bang, clatter, jingle-jangle thro' the world,  
And everybody runs to see him pass.  
He too, attracts, but by the noise he makes,  
He being gone the world wags as before.  
And when he's dying in the wayside ditch  
He finds too late he might have saved his pains  
By standing still, and nought would have been lost,  
But to the world some transient amusement,  
While he had saved his life, perhaps won fortune.  
Taken to business maybe, lived respected,  
Bought houses, lands, a seat in parliament,  
All men's approval, and a handsome wife.  
'Tis the exception to make genius pay,  
And it requires a deal of capital  
And business talent—things not oft possessed,  
As you'll admit, by men of genius.  
Take an example—Forty years ago,  
Frank Hill and I, just fresh from Cambridge,  
started  
In life together, equal, save in this—  
He was a genius, I was business-like ;  
I had a name for shrewdness, he for verses

And speeches at the Union. He published  
A book of poems, which men said promised much.  
One year we travelled and saw life together ;  
Then settled down to live it seriously.  
The Law Courts claimed him and the City me.  
There's not a doubt Hill might have made his  
fortune,  
Having good friends and powerful, and much  
talent,  
With humour, too, and a mellifluous voice  
Wherewith to move the hearts of jurymen.  
And he began well, and the briefs came in.  
A bright career seemed certain ; suddenly  
He sickened, had "convictions"—strange disease  
For a grown man ! Said it was more important  
That one should save his soul, if he possessed one,  
Than that he should gain gold and gather glory  
His whole life long, and lose his soul at last.  
Swore that the great profession of the law  
Seemed based on clever juggling with words,  
And, practised long, had power to blight all con-  
science,  
Obliterate differences 'twixt wrong and right,  
Lies and the truth, destroy the moral nature,  
And play the very deuce with everything.  
Money was far too dear at such a price.  
For him, he rather would be wise than rich,

And wisdom seemed to lie a different way  
From worldly wealth—crude talk ; poor stuff !  
But symptomatic of a deep disease.  
Whereon his friends at length consulted me,  
Remarking I was famed for common sense,  
And no one knew the patient half as well.  
I diagnosed the case, gave my prescription  
In these few words : *A good wife—to be taken  
Immediately.* But he refused the physic ;  
Said most irreverently 'twas quack medicine,  
And he would not be drugged to quietude  
Like a starved infant, but go look for bread,  
And use the voice God gave him till he found it.  
We then exhibited an heiress, handsome,  
And worth about a quarter of a million.  
She would have married him—most women would.  
He was a general favourite with ladies,  
Who are at best but superficial judges,  
And seldom can appreciate solid merit.  
Well—well—we did our best. It moves me now  
To think how he flew straight into the face  
Of Providence. Yes, briefly, he ignored her ;  
Said gilding did not make a pill more wholesome.  
And, knowing that my troth was elsewhere  
plighted,  
Would jeer me with—Physician, heal thyself !  
We were reduced to simple palliatives,



Race-meetings, balls, and dances—all no good.  
For one fine day Hill silently departed  
No man knew whither ; threw away his chances,  
Abandoned his profession, was not heard of  
For close upon two years. Then drops there-  
down

As from the clouds a bombshell of a book,  
“The Newest Gospel.” Ah, I see you’ve read it.  
Brilliant and scathing, pitilessly reasoned,  
Proving, if you’ll accept the premises,  
Beyond a doubt, that we are all impostors,  
Rank self-deceivers, miserable wretches,  
Trying beneath a plenteous lack of logic  
To hide our damnable hypocrisy ;  
All little, mean, and worthy of contempt ;  
And least, and meanest, most contemptible,  
The fools who cannot see that they are rogues.  
Aye, marvellously writ, I grant you that,  
Keen polished wit, a vast command of language,  
An instinct for detecting fallacy,  
Absurdity, anomaly, or cant,  
Howe’er well-turned the phrase that covers it,  
How high soe’er the turner of the phrase.  
But then, if Hill was right the world is wrong,  
And, after all, there’s age, experience,  
And weight of metal, all on the world’s side.  
Still it was clever, and it made a noise ;

Again the door of fortune stood ajar,  
And needed scarce a push to open to him.  
Perhaps there's nothing this strange world likes  
better

Than being well abused. So Hill was courted,  
Fêted, caressed ; and publishers were eager  
To keep his pen employed ; but Hill replied,  
He had said his say, he did not choose to write  
For fame or gold ; he had wished to show the  
world

That it was wrong, in the hope that seeing this  
It might have been induced to try to mend.  
But the disease had taken hold too firm,  
And the poor patient, gasping at death's door,  
Thought his physician could be only joking.  
He did not care for favourable reviews,  
Nor reading of himself in all the papers ;  
Nor being lionized by lovely ladies,  
Who thought his book " so clever, but too shock-  
ing,"

And wondered how he could have thought of it.  
Some time he waited, as he said, to see  
If any tried to answer or refute,  
Instead of which they chuckled at his humour.  
And so at length, in anger and disgust,  
And heavy sorrow, forth he went again,  
Shaking the dust of Europe from his feet,



Denouncing divers woes, foretelling changes,  
Ruins and desolations, wrath and woe,  
To come upon her, till the fire of God  
Raining from heaven should have purged her  
thoroughly  
Of all her foul corruptions.

Such the strain

Of his farewell. Good critics said nought finer  
Had e'er been written by the Hebrew prophets.  
Before its trumpet-blast had ceased to vibrate  
Within our ears Hill, passed from us for ever.  
Some eight years later—in a wooden shanty  
Built by himself, far off in the back-woods  
Of North America—he died; 'tis said  
The settlers came from far and near to see him  
In his last illness. He was loved by all  
Those poor rough people, which is not so strange,  
For he was lovable; but this is more  
Than I can fathom;—there seems little doubt  
That he loved them, and helped them from sheer  
love.

The cynosure of London drawing-rooms  
To be content to herd with stupid peasants  
In wooden huts! The proud fastidious Hill  
Playing,—'tis said he did—with savage brats!  
Baking coarse bread from corn himself had sown,  
And reaped, and ground, and living mostly on it!

Drinking but water from the spring hard by !  
And writing me that he was well and happy,  
And would not change his lot with any man !  
Brain-softening I suspect. Good Lord, Hill's  
rooms,

Hill's pictures, and Hill's dinners, and Hill's wine,  
Were once the envy of all connoisseurs,  
The humble admiration of all guests,  
And the despair—Well, well, it stands to reason  
The man was mad. And yet, the pity of it !  
All gifts alike seemed thrown away upon him :  
His genius he refused to turn to money,  
His eloquence he wasted in the woods,  
A peerless judge of wine, he took to water,  
A very epicure, he ate coarse bread,  
One of the finest talkers of his day,  
He babbled nursery rhymes to dirty babies,  
And Fortune oped her arms, and he repulsed her,  
And women sighed for him, and he lived single.  
'Tis charitable to suppose him crazy ;  
For if he was not—well, I'm not religious—  
But there's the parable about the talents,  
And one who hid his talent in a napkin,  
That will occur to me when Hill is talked of.  
The servant had but one, while Hill had fifty,  
And hid them all—nay, flung them in the gutter.  
But he is dead, "*De mortuis*," and so on ;

Dead, and will be forgotten presently.  
Even now 'tis only bookworms know his name,  
Or literary men like you.

So much

For Hill, and genius, and world-reform ;  
The world considered as a sickly pet  
That must be nursed and physicked back to health.  
'Tis now the turn of me and common-sense ;  
The world considered as a mighty axe  
To hew one's way with ; difficult to use,  
And apt to hurt one if one be not careful ;  
Well wielded, most efficient : here I sit,  
Wrong side of sixty, hale and hearty yet,  
And when that fiery demon leaves my toe  
Gout-free, as able to enjoy as ever.  
Something too stout may be, but that's a matter  
Simply of taste, and I am well content.  
You will excuse me if, to make my meaning  
Quite beyond doubt, I play the egotist ;  
But my first statement will not need excuse  
On that score, being this—I know right well  
Hill had upon a modest computation  
Some twenty times the brain power given me.  
That is a well known fact, Sir, I assure you,  
If there were any doubt upon the subject  
I'd take the benefit myself—there isn't.  
You have heard what he did with his fifty talents ;

I had but one, and this is my account.  
I went straightway into my father's office  
As I have hinted ; after Eton, Cambridge,  
France, Italy, and Greece, a counting-house  
In hideous London was a revelation  
Of unsuspected depths in human life  
Where it seemed calmest. There men sat and wrote,  
Added, subtracted, ruled red lines or black,  
All day and every day, and all their lives,  
At last becoming office furniture  
As much as desks and stools. 'Twas a dark hole ;  
No sunshine ever pierced its grimy windows,  
Through which you saw the backs of twenty  
houses ;  
And gas was burning more than half the year,  
All day within to light the sickly clerks :  
(The City clerk is generally sickly,  
Pale-faced, and narrow-chested ; goodness knows  
Why he should be so !)—how I loathed the place,  
And the dull work for months ! But then I knew  
There lay the nearest cut to wealth, position,  
And all the worldly prizes that men strive for,  
Whereof I meant to have my share, or perish.  
I put aside all childish thoughts and things,  
Crude theories of reform picked up from Hill,  
And longings for the Beautiful and True,  
And other adjectives made nouns by printing.

I said, "The world is good enough for me,  
If I can wring a fortune out of it."  
And so, not swerving to the right or left,  
For idle crotchets, misnamed "calls of conscience,"  
Or scruples as to the full rectitude  
Of the arrangements I found ready made  
And sanctioned by long usage, straight I went  
As arrow to my mark ; I married well,  
My wife being handsome, sensible, and rich.  
We did not rave of love, and hearts, and arrows,  
But we enjoyed each other's company,  
And knew that from a business point of view  
What we had done was right ; no more reward  
We wanted than this peaceful consciousness  
Of virtue. Sir, I bless her memory ;  
She was a splendid hostess, filled her place  
Right royally, and was the only woman  
I ever knew who read the money article  
Each morning in *The Times*, and understood it,  
And could discuss it with a business man.  
Far above rubies, aye, or diamonds either,  
I count her worth to me. For twenty years  
I slaved in that grim office ; then my father  
Died, and I took his place, the firm's sole head.  
And ten years more good fortune and hard work  
Made me what now you see me,—namely, Sir,  
A rich man, having honour, houses, lands,

Daughters well married, son in Parliament,  
And the resistless power that money gives.  
All this by dint of effort, and resolve  
To make the best of my environment,  
Not try, like Hill, to alter it. You see  
We reap even as we sow ; Hill chose a task  
He could not do, and, failing, worked no more.  
A noble task maybe, but 'tis undone ;—  
Therefore Hill's life was wasted utterly.  
I choose a task I can do, and complete it.  
“ No task to boast of ! ” think you to yourself,  
And all I'm saying seems perhaps to you  
Just the old selfish tale, how in the scramble  
I knocked so many down, and clutched so much.  
You'd like to preach to me of “ Altruism,”  
And “ sacrifice of self for other people,”  
But no, you shall not ; clear yourself of cant ;  
Given a healthy mind and healthy body,  
With room for both to work in, and you have  
Man, a divinely selfish animal,  
Whose soul and senses work so well together  
They never need to snarl at one another,  
And there's an end, thank God, of metaphysics.  
But,—I translate your smile—we're not there yet.  
“ 'Tis true 'tis pity, pity 'tis 'tis true.”  
You have, I see, a faulty nervous system—  
It shows most clearly when you would suppress

Your indignation—and your heart is weak ;  
While I plead guilty, blushing, to the gout.  
I draw to a close, my moral's only left ;  
'Tis short, and neither elegant nor new,  
Being in fact embodied in the coarse  
And hackneyed saw, *Don't teach your grandmother*  
*How to suck eggs* ; my version would be this,  
*Don't teach the world to turn* ; it's competent ;  
It went round very well ere we were thought of,  
And when we are again resolved to nothing,  
It strikes me it won't stop. Therefore be wise,  
And make the best of it, which you will find  
Is easy if you try. Don't go too far,  
Ever be moderate, shun all extremes,  
Remember logic carried to excess  
Will land you,—where, I scarcely like to say ;  
Remember you must always draw the line,  
Or, better still, let others draw it for you ;  
Amuse yourself with science and with logic,  
Politics, speculation, metaphysics,  
Culture's the word ! But mind the boundary !  
And when in your researches you perceive  
You are about to prove the world is wrong  
In some important matter, first make sure  
That there is no mistake, and when you find  
The chain is adamant, conclusion certain  
If you proceed—why draw the line at once

And stop ; for life is only compromise,  
And truth is relative, and we must live  
In comfort—that's the main point as I take it.  
And craft wins freedom, while revolt wears chains.  
Suppose for instance you, like most young men  
Who think, have doubts about religion ;  
Why having craft (say tact) you go to church,  
Propitiate society, and so forth,  
And save your credit as a thinking man  
'Mong thinking men, by scoffing delicately.  
You have your freedom, also the approval  
Of all mammas with marriageable daughters.  
But, without tact, you say you won't pretend  
To be what you are not, abjure all churches,  
Talk Atheism, and are labelled " dangerous,"  
And shunned accordingly. Well, which is best ?  
You'll seem to be just what you are!—all non-  
sense;—

Why you yourself don't know just what you are,  
Nor cannot tell an atom what you seem,  
Save to yourself, and that's a fancy portrait  
Unrecognisable by other people.  
'Tis best to seem to be what others like  
While you're with others ; be in fact like Paul,  
" All things to all men that by all means you  
May save some"—money ! Ah, this shocks you  
now,



If you said what you thought, you would denounce  
me;

Prospectively you slash me with a satire,  
Or pink me with a steel bright epigram,  
Some venom in the point. No, don't protest;  
Let it be good of the sort, I will not grumble.  
I like your verses as I said before;  
You sing, some poets don't; sing on, sing on;  
While you are tuneful, by the rood, I'd listen  
Though you should flay me, morally, alive,—  
And laugh too, with the best; don't mangle me  
With the dull loaded bludgeon of abuse,  
Or the ragged oyster-shells of mere hard names :  
If I'm not worth dissection let me go.

(There are few things that help digestion more  
Than talk, my doctor tells me; I shall know  
Soon if he speak the truth; baiting a poet  
Is certainly good sport in any case,  
But colchicum is better for the gout  
I fear, unless that twinge means nothing. Well,  
I shall know that too in a few hours' time.)

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## A VOLUNTARY.

AH, what a glorious land is this to-day,  
Full of glad sunshine—wonderful with flowers.  
Rise, my beloved, rise and come away—

Whom should we envy while these gifts are ours?  
The gold that summer heaps upon the lea,  
The Danæ-showers of the laburnum tree,  
The purple hills' imperial array,  
The woods' leaf-turrets, terraces, and towers?  
Oh come, my love, my fair one, come with me!

There is a sound of church-bells borne from far,  
The beauteous land is wrapt in Sabbath calm;  
More musical and sweet the flower-bells are,  
And the birds' songs than any human psalm.  
O hills, O woods, O sunlight, O pure sky,  
Ye are the temple of our God most high.  
Why soar these spires toward any outer star  
While our fair earth lies folded in His arm,  
Who saith to me—"Come forth, for here am I?"

Let us go forth unto Him, O my sweet,  
Through this our Eden as in days of old  
Two mortals by Him trod with fearless feet,  
And communed with Him and were blithe and  
bold.

No church-wall then, or priest to come between—  
Let us go forth—He shall again be seen,  
And from the silence of the hills shall greet ;  
And in His glorious garment us enfold,  
Yea, to the holiest place shall lead us in.

\* \* \* \* \*

O Day, for ever to be marked with white,  
O perfect "bridal of the earth and sky,"  
For thy most bounteous guerdon of delight  
I thought to praise thee e'er thou cam'st to die ;  
But lo, unto thee every thing doth raise  
One mighty pæan of exulting praise :  
Man, trees, flowers—all ; yea, even sable Night  
Takes thee to her dark bosom tenderly,  
And scarce will let thee go, thou Day of Days.

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## FAILURE.

LET my head lie quiet here upon your shoulder  
Once, once more ;  
Dead desires are round us, round us dead hopes  
moulder—  
All is o'er.

We were young and strong, dear, stout and hopeful-  
hearted—  
Who could know  
What dark future lay before us when we started  
Long ago ?

When we two joined hands, dear, in our life's  
bright morning,  
Heard the call,  
Gladly rushed to join the strife, supineness scorn-  
ing ;  
Over all

Saw Hope's sunrise gleaming glorious and golden,  
Knew no fear  
Though beside us Failure marching un beholden,  
Was so near.

Now we know the secret—fight by failure ended,  
    Final fall ;  
Nothing good or great, dear, nothing grand or  
    splendid  
    In it all.

Youth's bright morning passes, and for all its  
    blossom,  
    Fruit is none ;  
Now my head lies quiet on your soft white bosom,  
    All is done.

And the haze is thickening round us, making  
    dimmer  
    The bare room,  
Lighted only by the charcoal's lurid glimmer  
    In the gloom.

To that brazier's glimmer hath the glory dwindled,  
    Fallen far,  
Lo, the light whereat our hearts' high hope was  
    kindled :  
    Lo, our star.

God-sent star we deemed it, sent to cheer and  
    speed us,  
    Guide and save,  
When 'twas but a pale corpse-candle, lit to lead us  
    To the grave.

Some will blame Fate's harshness, some our own  
demerit—

Shall we know ?

Shall we feel it, shall we care for it, or hear it,  
Where we go ?

Some will mock as crazed, and some will curse as  
craven ;

Let them lie.

Shall they mar the perfect quiet of our haven  
With their cry ?

Though it rent high heaven, though the earth were  
shaken

And the deep—

Lo, not all the tumult there should ever waken  
One from sleep.

Need we say farewell, dear—we who go together,  
Hand in hand,

Through the night and darkness and the winter  
weather,

To Death's land ?

Nay, but cheek by cheek, love, as in nights past  
over,

Breast to breast

We two gladly enter, lover clasping lover,  
Into rest.

## A REBEL RETREAT.

OUTNUMBERED—defeated—disgraced not—  
fall back 'neath the cover of night;  
Slowly and silently back to the place we have  
chosen to die.

We have finished our course, we have kept the  
good faith, we have fought the good fight,  
And the fire we have kindled shall yet be a  
beacon to nations on high.

We shall not see the light of it, we shall not joy in  
it, we shall not know;  
And it may be that men shall forget us, gone  
down to the world of the dead.  
But the seed we have watered with blood shall live  
and shall flourish and grow,  
And our children shall laugh where we wept,  
live in peace where we battled and bled.

He that seeks earthlier payment, pleasure or glory  
or gold

Let him part from us now ere too late—unre-  
proached let him fare on his way ;

He shall live and get good of his life, and we shall  
lie buried and cold,

In the darkness of failure and death, beyond love  
and the light of the day.

He may be wisest—we know not—we have but  
strength to be strong,

Hope that our death may do more for the cause  
than our lives that here cease ;

Faith that right is still right though it fail—though  
it flourish that wrong is still wrong ;

And that fair as are life and its pleasures there  
is something far fairer than these.

O'er the measureless waters of Time from this our  
last foothold we gaze

Back ere we plunge and are lost in the sevenfold  
darkness before,

And see in the infinite ocean reflected from  
heaven, the blaze

Of the starry victorious souls of the great and  
the good we adore.



And we know of these sons of the morning now  
throned with the gods upon high  
And worshipped of all men—the most part were  
hated and tortured and slain ;  
When they lived upon earth lived despised—yea,  
despised and rejected did die,  
Which now are the stars that we steer by, but  
for whom we were drifting in vain.

Shall we sorrow then, we, that men scorn us, who  
are not as stars in the night—  
Who are only as lamps stricken pale with the  
dawn of the splendour of day,  
Who seeing the truth have believed, who have  
borrowed of these men the light  
We were fain that the world should have seen ?  
It slew them, and us let it slay !

Right glad to be reckoned as worthy to die as the  
starry ones died,  
In the fight 'gainst the tyrants on thrones or  
the tyrants of thought by the cross,  
Having given up all for our faith, having ranged  
us on Liberty's side  
For the love that is lovelier than life, for the  
riches not counted in dross.

Yea, though our strength has been broken, though  
we by our faith are undone,  
Though nothing is left to us now but reproach  
and reviling and death,  
We do not regret or repent, but make ending as  
when we begun,  
With the self-same hope in our hearts and the  
self-same ardour and faith.

There is no cause but fails at the first, how  
righteous soever and good ;  
None whose foundation is based not on lives for  
its love's sake laid down,  
And is builded of passion and pain, and its stones  
are cemented with blood,  
Or ever the envious gods with their glory the  
edifice crown.

Farewell ! We can die without fear—we have done  
what we could—we are fain  
To leave the good labour for others to finish : fall  
back to the wall ;  
Then let them come close ere you fire—expend not  
a last shot in vain !  
And the end will be brief and the sleep will be  
long, and good-night to us all !

## THE WRECK.

**I**N the trough of the waves it labours beaten  
by battering seas,  
Heavily hither and thither it rolls at each thundering blow,  
Groaning as if 'twere in pain, crying out to the tempest for ease,  
Shrieking sometimes like a beast in the power of a pitiless foe,

As its mammoth carcase is crushed, and its mighty rib-bones crash,  
And the planking breaks and flies, and the strong bolts creak and strain ;  
In its side is a death-wound yawning, a huge and horrible gash,  
Whence as it tosses, like blood the water rushes amain.

Clear cut 'gainst the leaden clouds the white sails  
shimmer and gleam  
On the far horizon's verge, catching the kiss of  
the sun ;  
Here in the storm-clouds' shadow the billows bellow  
and scream  
Like hounds round the red deer's corse when  
his last wild race is run.

Water-logged, helpless, dismasted, abandoned by  
all in this hour ;  
This morn with a bound like a steed the caverns  
of night it left,  
With white sails full of the wind, and white decks  
wet with the shower  
Of spray that flew o'er the prow from the hissing  
waters it cleft.

You think as you gaze upon it of life that struggles  
and fails,  
And lies at last thus helpless in the power of a  
merciless sea ;  
While ever afar in the sunlight the gladly glitter-  
ing sails  
Pass and re-pass, and leave it in its lonely  
agony.

And the clouds are heavy above it, and the waters  
    loud around,  
And it tosses hither and thither and finds nor  
    help nor rest ;  
Though fair was the morning promise as it started  
    outward-bound,  
From the quiet haven of Home for the limitless  
    lands of the West.

For a vague rich Eldorado in the golden sunset-  
    lands,  
There to find wealth and glory or to be fulfilled  
    of fame ;  
But the breakers roared ahead, there were rocks  
    and treacherous sands,  
And the broken life and the ship find ending one  
    and the same.

Down deep in the utter darkness among the bones  
    of the dead,  
Lost hopes and prayers unanswered, and the  
    piteous wreckage of love ;  
Dead laurels and tarnished crowns, spoiled gold  
    from a maiden's head,  
Sad sands of the Past below and the waters of  
    Fate above.

## CONDEMNED.

SO my last day draws deathward ; so the light,  
The pallid prison daylight dies away,  
And shadows lengthen on the cold white wall.  
I shall not see the setting sun again,  
Nor any flower, nor hear the glad birds' songs,  
Nor the wind's laughter in the tossing trees  
In wild spring days—not once for ever more.  
The thoughts of dying men turn oft, 'tis said,  
Unto their childhood. I, so hale and strong,  
Am dying now, and all this summer day  
The stray sunbeams that thro' the grating fell  
Told to me long forgotten tales of home.  
And thro' the mists of years showed me once more  
Sweet meadows, golden cornfields, shady lanes,  
Whose giant hedgerows half shut out the sky ;  
A little cottage hid in towering trees,  
And steeped in roses and in honeysuckle,  
There was my mother, saintly, pure and grave ;  
My father, hard of hand and soft of heart ;  
And there a child who used to sit beneath  
The mighty trees thro' hours of summer days,

To hear the surging sound of winds above,  
And dream it was a God that talked with him.  
What dreams he dreamed ! How strangely bright  
and fair  
Were life's broad meadows in the morning light  
Stretching to the horizon and beyond !  
Broad meadows narrowed now to a prison cell.

What made me kill her ? I who loved her so.  
Who love her now ; who always loved her more  
Than any gift the gods could give beside.  
Who loved her so ! Aye, there the answer lies.  
For in my brain there lurks a cursed disease  
That turns all love to poison as it grows ;  
Poison that burns my very life away  
With the damned fever men call jealousy.  
'Twas not enough that she was pure and good,  
And full of love for me and me alone ;  
I could not bear that men should look upon her,  
And if she fondled children I grew wild.  
Yea, the very cats and dogs that fawned for food  
About her feet, became my foes—mad—mad.  
The old madness blood and only blood will quell.  
What, art thou here, sweet wife ? Yea, I am ill.  
I have been dreaming the old horrible dreams.  
Kiss me—but ah, thy throat ! O God, O God,  
Torture me not on this wise any more.

My punishment is more than I can bear.  
See how she stands in yonder corner's gloom,  
Where the thick darkness always gathers first!  
Her hand is on her throat, and 'twixt the small  
White fingers trickles the dark purple blood,  
As tho' 'twould never stop, and all her hair  
Clings to her marble neck like tarnished gold,  
And her sweet face is bruised and smeared with  
red.

Shut out the sight—O God, shut out the sight.

Lo brain and eyes both play me false—there's  
nought.

But now I mind me of that last red day,  
Her last of earth, my last of liberty.  
I lingered thro' the summer afternoon  
In the cool shadow of the quiet wood,  
Where leaves were murmuring even as they used  
When I sat listening to them a happy boy.  
But now they whispered murders in mine ears,  
And goaded me to frenzy with their tale,  
Until she came and spake me tenderest words,  
And led me by the hand as oft before.  
Yea, I had gone, and all been well even then,  
But that I fancied in her patient face,  
Made wan by me, some inner shade of doubt—  
Some terror of me as of a savage beast—



That waked the half-soothed demon in my breast,  
And he leaped forth and conquered. Nay, but I—  
I knew not what I did, or what had done,  
Till with a faint low moan she reeled and fell.  
And then I flung myself beside her there  
And cursed myself, and prayed the earth might  
    gape  
And I fall headlong down to burning hell.  
She only smiled, as some sweet saint might smile,  
Knowing, forgiving, blessing ; and so then  
Her head sank slowly down amid the leaves,  
And all I loved on this dark earth was dead.

I see between those rusty window-bars  
A small bright star—a star that never moves,  
But watches me all night with steadfast eye.  
And seeing it I am fain to think that one  
In holy heaven has sent that star to shine  
Into my prison for a sign that she  
Forgives me—'tis a vain and foolish thought.  
Lo there it watches over me this last night  
For the last time, and after this no need  
Of any light, or star, or sign for me.  
But I must sleep, for I would face the crowd  
Calmly with nerves well-strung and steady brain ;  
The butchers shall not say they saw me flinch,  
Tremble, change colour, either at their yell,—

Brute cry of mere bloodthirstiness,—or at sight  
Of the gallows and the hangman's cap and cord.  
I woo thee, gentle sleep, for the last time.  
If thou wilt take me to thy breast this once,  
Amid the thousands thou art nursing now,  
And charm a few poor hours of night away,  
O thou of all men's comforters most blest,  
I shall not need thy ministrations more.

[*Sleeps.*

Where art thou? Mother, mother, reach thy  
hand.

Nay, she died years ago. O wife, sweet wife—  
Dead, dead—all dead, and I am dead and damned.  
The darkness chokes me. Light, for God's love,  
light,  
Tho' it be hell-fire feeding on my flesh.

Nay, I am well—well now I know the place,  
Which, no offence, I took at first for hell,  
And thought the devil had stolen a march on me,  
And so cried out—Aye, warder, sit ye down,  
You will not have to humour me for long.  
Hark, where the prison clock tolls four; and hark,  
The busy hammers in the echoing street.

O, I have had a dream of Paradise;  
A dream that even my waking could not spoil.  
A dream that poured deep calm into my heart,

And robbed of all its sting the shameful death.  
I die to day ; and on this wise it went—  
I knew that I was dead ; the prison grave  
Had closed upon me as it will e'er long,  
And I had done with life and all things here.  
I was wrapt upward thro' the fields of space,  
How long I know not. When at last I stayed  
I stood all lonely in a blaze of light.  
I heard from far the sound of angels' wings,  
And music rolling like a mighty voice  
Around the throne of God, for I was 'ware  
That I was then in Heaven ; but on my neck  
The halter hung, mine arms were pinioned fast ;  
Mine eyes were darkened so that I could see  
Nought but the glory that shone thro' their lids,  
And would not be shut out ; and so I stood  
Waiting with trembling knees to hear my doom..  
Thunder of trumpets shattered all the air,  
And sudden silence followed on the sound,  
So deep, so awful, that I sank adown,  
And covering my face lay trembling there  
Helpless for terror, till there came a voice  
As from the peak of some cloud-hidden Alp,  
Whose dazzling summit on the stars looks down :  
From very far it seemed, and yet 'twas clear  
As tho' 'twere close beside me : " Man of blood  
Know'st thou the doom awaiting thy lost soul ? "

And from my very heart the cry was wrung,  
“Yea, yea, I know, and feel my doom is just.”  
Then the soul-shaking trumpets pealed again,  
And I lay waiting for the curse to fall.  
I heard the rushing of a million wings,  
And from a million voices there arose  
A mighty dirge for one more perished soul.  
Then instantly I had been hurled to hell;  
But o’er the trumpets’ tumult and the wail  
Of the long dirge, I heard a voice I knew—  
“Thou gavest me this soul, I claim it now.”  
And deepest silence fell after the cry.  
It seemed to me that every saved soul  
Was trembling with me betwixt hope and fear  
To hear the sentence of the Mighty Judge.  
The still small voice made answer—“It is thine;”  
And in a glorious tempest of glad sound  
The echo rang from myriad angel throats,  
Scaling the heavens like thunder—“It is thine.”  
And when it ended we were left alone.  
Then in some while I rose, and heard again  
That well-known voice, which spake these words  
to me,  
In tones of love and pity—“Fear not thou,  
But follow me, and I will show thee where  
Thy sins may be forgiven for my sake.”  
And from mine eyes the darkness passed away,

And thro' the glory even as thro' a cloud  
I saw a face and hand that becked me on.  
The sweet Madonna-face of my slain love,  
Calm with the blessed peace no mortal knows,  
And glorious with immortality.  
I followed as she bade me, gliding on  
Thro' groups in white who smote their harps and  
    sung ;  
But ever as I came they turned aside,  
And fled at sight of me and sung no more.  
And I was sad and hung my shameful head  
And wept ; but onward still we went, and still  
The angels seeing fled as I passed by.  
But last a spot we reached where clear as glass  
A pool of water laughed amid sweet flowers,  
And in the midst a Tree there was, whereon  
A Dove sate alway. Then again she spake—  
“ Here thou may'st wash away thine earthly sins,  
And cleanse thy soul of blood that stains it now.”  
And speaking thus her arms were round my neck,  
And lo, the halter fell and I was free.  
Then with her hand in mine she led me down  
Unto the pool, and when I touched its brim  
A weight was lifted from my breast, and I  
Sang praising God for all His wondrous ways,  
While the Dove hovered o'er our happy heads,  
And I was clean and pure as when a child.

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But as my mother came with welcoming arms  
To clasp me, the lost sheep of all their flock,  
Found now, and saved, and dearest of them all,  
Lo, on a sudden with a start I woke ;  
Was wrapt from day to night, from heaven to hell,  
From joy to torment in a moment's space.  
Dost wonder now I called upon thee so ?  
Thou know'st the rest—what think'st thou of my  
dream ?

Grim as a death's head that hard face of thine !  
I had liefer be the bloodstained thing I am,  
With the rope already almost at my throat,  
Than such a passionless block of wood as thou.  
When God in mercy sends my soul a gleam  
Of happiness, then thou dost moan and sigh,  
And turn thine eyes to heaven, as who should say,  
“ Lo now this man makes sport of death O Lord.  
I pray thou wilt requite him seventy-fold.”  
But when despair's black night o'ershadows me,  
Then with a half-concealed and saintly sneer  
Thou turn'st aside as tho' thou said'st within :  
“ The mere brute courage of this murderer fails.  
Without belief what thing can any do ?  
Without thy help, O Lord ; he knows Thee not,  
Forsaken of Thy spirit, left to work  
His own destruction, and to reap himself

That which he sowed—this is his doom, and I,  
Poor mortal, seeing, know that Thou art just.”


See, it is dawn. I pray thee leave to me  
The few poor hours of life that yet are mine.  
Thy face makes gloom of daylight, and in heaven  
I saw none such. My soul hath found sweet  
peace.

Disturb me not again till it is time.

\* \* \* \* \*

Yea, I am ready, waiting, glad to go.  
The crowd ? O, aye, I had forgotten it.  
Let us not stay, I would fulfil my dream.  
Sweet wife, dear mother, ye are near me now.  
I have not known such deep content before,  
Nor ever felt such peace as now I feel.  
How they are howling for my life without.  
Let us not keep them waiting, for 'tis time,  
And all things now are ready. Let us go.

---



## "TILL THE DAY BREAK."

THE night is dark, the heavy clouds close o'er  
us,

And we stand watching where the dawn shall  
be ;

Behind us is the darkness, and before us

Thunders unseen the tempest-troubled sea.

Yea, dark it is, and waiting-time is weary.

Yet have we faith that it shall end ere long,

And sudden rising through the darkness dreary

Sound in our ears the joyous morning-song.

Aye, very dark, and full of rain and thunder ;

The clank of chains and cries of tortured slaves ;

Yet do we know the clouds shall roll asunder,

And the pure sun bring peace upon the waves.

Upon the shore we stand with eastward faces ;

And watch and wait, and doubt not, neither fear,

Though from the blackness of the earth's dark  
places

Comes not a word of courage or of cheer.




As on the earth night giveth place to morning,  
As after storms the gentle calm doth come,  
So, after this dark night of shame and scorning,  
The morn shall rise, and the loud storm be  
dumb.

Then shall the thrones that are secure, unshaken,  
Fall as leaves fall when a strong wind doth blow,  
And kings be slain, and altars be forsaken,  
And the high places of the earth brought low.

And chainèd slaves who work with stripes for  
guerdon,  
And all whose hearts are sick with bonds or fear,  
And whosoe'er hath bent beneath his burden,  
In that day shall stand free beside us here.

So stand we on the shore and gaze before us  
Until the dawn comes that shall come ere long;  
Till from the earth shall rise the mighty chorus  
And glorious thunder of the morning-song.

Till on the sea the golden light shall glitter,  
Dispelling these foul phantoms of the night;  
Each cankering wrong and all the bondage bitter,  
And the Republic dawn upon our sight.



## SPRING SONG.

UNDER her footsteps flowers ;  
    Before her summer bowers,  
And sunny shining hours,  
    And all things fair.  
Behind her night and snow,  
And winter winds that blow  
All sadly to and fro,  
    And touch her hair.

Around her birds and song,  
And breezes sweet and strong ;  
For wild old Winter's wrong  
    Is wiped away  
By her, who comes with feet  
Most fairy-light and fleet,  
And all the world is sweet—  
    The sky is full of day.


Her calm white brows are crown'd  
With blossoms wreathed and bound,  
That throw a scent around ;  
    While at her tread

The earth awakes once more,  
And blooms from shore to shore,  
With white and gold decked o'er,  
And green and red.

Her hair is like fine gold,  
Wherein are manifold  
Great rubies warm, and cold  
Pearls white as snows ;  
And these are snowdrops white,  
That winter spares to smite ;  
This ruby burning bright—  
A budding rose.

Upon the naked trees,  
By slow and sure degrees,  
Warmed with the fragrant breeze,  
The leaves begin ;  
On all the stems below  
The fiery spring flowers blow,  
While hums with music low  
The bee within.

The frowns of winter flee ;  
The rivulets are free ;  
On earth and sky and sea,  
On glad gold air,



Breaks forth the smile of Spring :  
With song the woodlands ring—  
There's joy in everything,  
So everything is fair !

This is her first sweet smile ;  
We wait a little while,  
We of this storm-girt isle  
Of fogs and rain,  
In doubt and hope and fear,  
Because the maiden near  
May yet, by Winter drear,  
Be clasped again.

Under her footsteps flowers ;  
Before her summer bowers,  
And sunny shining hours,  
And all fair things.  
Behind her night and snow ;  
But these depart, and lo—  
Before her flowerets glow,  
The glad bird sings.

---

## A REBEL RIDING SONG.

RIDE on, ride on, for the night is gone,  
And dawn is in the sky,  
And overhead in our rebel red  
The banners of morning fly.  
The starry watch from their places go,  
The bugler winds reveillée blow,  
And a tryst's to keep with a waiting foe  
Or ever the noon is high.

We watch the fight of the day and night,  
The shadows are fain to cling ;  
But the sunshafts quiver on field and river,  
Night's hosts fly shuddering,  
As when we charge through the field that nears  
From the level points of our headlong spears  
Shall fly the guardsmen and grenadiers  
Of our gracious Lord the King.

Ride fast, ride fast, lest the time be past—  
Ride, lest they deem us slow ;  
Friends may be late, but the tryst of hate  
Must be kept to the hour with a foe.

We are ready to fight, we are ready to die,  
We are ready for all things except to fly;  
Ride on, ride fast, ride merrily,  
Keep time to the song we know.

For we ride along to a stirring song,  
And this is the song we sing:  
Up with the red! Bury the dead!  
Loud let the bugles ring!  
And off with every tonsured pate!  
And down with priests and all their prate!  
And down with Church, and down with State!  
And down with Crown and King!

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## TO A DISCONSOLATE POET.

## I.

LOUD voices and fierce oaths—a tavern brawl ;  
Quick flash of steel—a blow, a shriek, a fall !  
On the foul floor, begrimed with filth and stain,  
The master of the mighty line lies slain ;  
First singer at the Muses' festival,  
Young, glorious, and unknown, now crowned in  
vain.

*To die so young—and there was something here :*  
He touched his forehead, mounted without fear  
The scaffold, went with these words to his doom :  
The knife crashed and a meteor plunged to  
gloom  
Amid black clouds that in a sky more clear  
Had shone a star the darkness to illume.

*My name is writ on water*—thus he said  
Who on Fame's threshold felt himself struck dead,  
And lies in Rome by Shelley 'neath fair flowers,  
His tomb a pilgrim shrine ; and strife is ours  
Who shall praise loudest, and above his head  
The laurels he once longed for fall in showers.

Into the garret fell the dawn-light gray  
On an awful face and writhen form that lay  
    In death self-sought ere manhood—o'er and  
        done  
    In seventeen years the life of Chatterton ;  
Beneath the world's wheels crushed to songless  
    clay  
The lark that might have soared into the sun.

## II.

'Thou singest well—none listens to thy lays,  
'Thou singest well—and others wear the bays ;  
    Thou hast bartered youth and all its sweets for  
        fame,  
    And payment lingers, and none knows thy  
        name :  
'Thy heart grows sick for one poor breath of praise,  
    And thy life shrivels in Ambition's flame.

It may be thou shalt compass thy desire  
When sorrow and old age have quenched the fire  
    And slain the longing. Brother, it may be  
    That life hath neither fame nor praise for thee,  
But that Death's fingers smiting on thy lyre  
    Shall make it sound from sounding sea to sea.



It may be thou shalt live unknown and die,  
And be forgot of all men utterly :  
    That the gray lichen o'er thy name shall grow  
    And none come near thee where thou liest low,-  
As the forgotten Dead in myriads lie  
    Until the trumpet-blast of Doom shall blow.

What matter? These the fiery pathway trod,  
All their reward being rest beneath the sod.  
    Is thy pain greater? Such reward less sure  
    For thee? I tell thee if thy love be pure,  
And the god of song be verily thy god,  
    As these men thou shalt suffer and endure,

And without ceasing still his praises sing,  
And give him thanks for all thy suffering,  
    Who claimed thee though men knew not for his  
    son  
    From that first day whereon thy life begun,  
And shall not fail thee when the evening  
    Closes in peace upon thy day's work done.

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## CONTRA MUNDUM:

## A SONG OF HERETICS.


WHO are on our side—who?  
One, or it may be two;  
Liker still it is none.  
Lo, and against you then,  
The host of heaven, and men  
Saving the two or one.  
Turn ye from false to true,  
Turn ye to faith again,  
Turn ere ye be undone.

What do ye friends to stray  
From the ancient well-known way  
Of comfort and joy and peace?  
The sheltered and tranquil road  
That leadeth to His abode  
Whose mercy shall never cease?  
Over you lightnings play,  
Under you ruin is strowed,  
Ye have nor rest nor ease.

Ye are torn by Doubt and Desire,  
Your lives consume as with fire,  
    Ye get no good of your youth,  
But ever ye seek and cry,  
And neither is any reply,  
    Nor finding of any truth ;  
Till in the search ye tire,  
Faint and falter and die,  
    Being but fools in sooth.

Being but fools and blind,  
For what hope ye to find  
    Gleaning Time's thrice-gleaned field ?  
Gone is the golden grain,  
Long the last mighty wain  
    To the harvest-home has reeled ;  
Nought is there left behind,  
No, nor ever again  
    Those furrows an ear shall yield.

But of the garnered store  
Those who stand at the door  
    Of the granary shall give  
Of thrashed and winnowed wheat  
To each as much as is meet  
    That he may eat and live.  
What now desire ye more ?  
Why do ye labour to eat  
    Wind, and drink from a sieve ?



Your fathers, the happy dead,  
Ate of the common bread,  
    Drank at the common spring ;  
Were they less wise than ye ?  
Less strong, less bold, less free ?  
    Can ye as they sang sing,  
Dying, who sang and said :  
“ *O grave, where is thy victory ?*  
    *O Death, where is thy sting ?* ”

Who are on our side—who ?  
The hare-brained feverish few,  
    Lovers of change, and boys  
Scarce on the threshold of life,  
Eager for action and strife,  
    Blows and tumult and noise.  
Youth being battled through,  
Business, children, and wife,  
    Take the place of the toys.

We know how it ends, we wise :  
We raised the self-same cries  
    In our hot youth long gone—  
Down with sceptre and Church !  
For Truth alone let us search,  
    Liberty leading us on !  
So we, baying the skies,  
Needing only the birch,  
    And a dunce’s cap to don.

Fever and discontent  
Ere to the yoke be bent  
    Backs that have known no load ;  
Chafing, champing the bit  
Till one is friend with it,  
    Fury at whip and goad.  
When youth's spring time is spent,  
And years have given you wit,  
    Plodding like us the road

With rhythmic regular tread,  
Looking only ahead,  
    Husbanding speed with care ;  
Then, indeed, ye shall see  
How that by prancing ye  
    Raised but dust in the air ;  
How ye had better sped,  
Letting what will be—be,  
    Strength for the course to spare.

We are the wise and old,  
Our years are well nigh told,  
    Our course is well nigh run ;  
Here on the threshold of Death  
We cry with our failing breath,  
    Turn ere ye be undone !  
Gather you silver and gold,  
Clothe you with fashion and faith,  
    Put you convention on !

But if ye still are proud,  
Stiff-necked, not to be bowed,  
Wise in your own conceit,  
The gods ye have scorned—bethink—  
Shall give you blood to drink,  
And your own flesh to eat.  
For wisdom is with the crowd,  
Who rises not shall sink  
And be trod under feet.

Who are on our side—who?  
'Tis weary following you :  
Neither glory nor gain,  
Nor honour of men, nor praise,  
Comes to you all your days ;  
Your dreams are wild and vain :  
For us youth's skies are blue,  
And through the rose-hung ways  
We follow the spring god's train.

Behind the pard-drawn car  
Where'er the maddest are,  
There in the midst are we,  
Under the torches' fire  
Where cymbal, pipe and lyre  
And songs and shouts of glee  
Sound to the farthest star,  
We seek our own desire ;  
We know not what seek ye.

But this alone we know—  
Youth on fleet wings doth go,  
And age has little mirth ;  
And Death shall take ere long  
The fair, the brave, the strong,  
And hide them cold in earth.  
Wherefore in youth's mid-glow  
Kisses and wine and song  
Are all we deem of worth.

But endless page on page  
Of Poet, Seer, and Sage,  
For ever more ye turn ;  
And every toilsome day  
Fades fainter far away  
The Truth ye long to learn.  
And youth as drear as age,  
With heart and head grown gray,  
Is all the wage ye earn.


Come now, be one with us,  
Where leaves are luminous  
With the mad torches' flare,  
Where in the whirling dance  
The white limbs gleam and glance,  
The wine-flushed cheeks flash fair,  
Bright eyes grow amorous,  
Soft arms wave dalliance,  
Riot is everywhere !

---

Let earth go ill or well,  
So that the song still swell,  
    So that the dance whirl on,  
So that we win but this—  
To laugh and love and kiss,  
    Or ever life be gone!  
There may be Heaven and Hell,  
But present pleasure *is*,  
    And that we feed upon!

See how they pass us by  
With jest and mockery,  
    Or comfort more forlorn—  
With light and heavy wit  
That hits or does not hit,  
    Of mirth or malice born!  
Ever we cry our cry—  
Ever they answer it  
    With pity or with scorn.

We are weary and would cease;  
We are fain to be at peace;  
    Would God the strife were done!  
This iron world of wrong  
For us is all too strong,  
    On our side is not one.  
Not one? What shouts the breeze?  
What is the thunderous song  
    The sea chants to the sun?





What saith the heaven above ?

What sing the stars thereof ?

What words have dawn and day ?

Stars, skies, and winds and waves,

Think ye that fools and slaves

Hear what they sing or say

As one hears having love—

The soul all ill that braves

To live as free as they ?

Who are on your side—who ?

Many noble and true,

Many bravest and best,

Purest, highest in worth,

Of the sons of men on earth—

Heaven's most heavenliest !

Why fail the hearts in you

O chainless and free from birth,

Crowned, and chosen and blest ?

For lo, while Time endures

The goodliest gifts are yours

Of all the gods can give :

The souls to you they gave,

Of cloud, of wind, of wave,

Of all free things that live ;

And no man binds or lures,

And no vain gods enslave,

Or punish or forgive.

Let these seek faiths grown old,  
These praise of men, these gold,

These passion's fierier bliss—  
For ye, beloved, ye,  
The fearless and the free,

A higher guerdon is,  
Not to be bought or sold  
In mart or sanctuary,  
Or found in pleasure's kiss.

This is your praise for aye  
Which shall not pass away,  
But ever grow more bright;  
Ye to yourselves were true,  
Yourselves and Freedom, through  
Doubt's evening and Faith's night.  
In Liberty's full day  
All souls shall honour you  
In honouring the light.

O true of heart and tried,  
Be glad when men deride,  
Be glad of worldly scorn!  
And doubt not nor despair,  
For night breaks everywhere,  
For night is over-worn,  
And heaven is on your side,  
And all things free and fair,  
And love and light and morn.

And though the night be long  
We hear the choral song  
    Faint if it be and far ;  
And know the end is near  
Of slavish faith, and fear  
    And custom's chains that mar  
The life of man with wrong :  
The morning song we hear,  
    We see the morning star.

Hate, lust, and cruelty  
Are nightmare forms that flee  
    As night's dark veils divide,  
Letting for ever through  
High heaven's serenest blue  
    That none again shall hide.  
And ye, beloved, ye,  
Faithful and tried and true,  
    Fear not, be strong, abide.

'Tis but a little space  
Ye tread these worldly ways,  
    And rest beyond is sure ;  
And in the years to come,  
Though ye be dead and dumb  
    Your life-work shall endure,  
And spread and grow apace  
Till wrong be overcome,  
    And earth be purged and pure,

---

And men be wise and free;  
Ye know these things shall be,  
    Ye know ye haste their day,  
Ye lose your life to give  
To millions yet to live,  
    Way, Truth, Life, all things.   Yea,  
The Truth ye only see,  
The Life restorative  
    And Freedom's peaceful way.

So ye indeed shall have  
A life beyond the grave,  
    More blest by far than theirs  
Who see past earthly days  
A heaven of hymns and praise,  
    A paradise of prayers.  
As Life could not enslave,  
So Death shall not abase  
    The soul that all things dares.

Yea, brothers, thus shall ye  
Win immortality ;  
    In lives by you made fair,  
In minds by you made blest—  
And ye yourselves shall rest  
    Free from all cark and care,  
From pain and sorrow free,  
In the All-mother's breast  
    With the great and good that were.

## AFTER ALL.

'TIS even as we swore it should be never ;  
    I am quite tired, and you are half grown  
    cold ;  
Maid cannot love, nor man be true for ever ;  
    Our plight is common, and the story old.

I love you not who loved you once so dearly ;  
    Your passion cools too, like an unfed flame ;  
No jealousy, no quarrel—nought but merely  
    Sickness of pleasures, all grown stale and tame.

A sense that things once sweet are sweet no longer,  
    A weariness of loving looks and ways ;  
A faint desire for freedom growing stronger,  
    A chill contempt for the old rapturous days.

I smile to think how placid are our faces,  
    How cold our lifeless kisses when we meet,  
How irksome and how languid the embraces  
    That were so wild and passionate and sweet.

Why should we two cheat ourselves more with  
feigning ?

Let us stand fearless now, and speak the truth.  
'Tis but a single blossom deathward waning,  
In the flower-flooded summer-time of youth

Where myriads more as beautiful are blowing ;  
Frost nipped it off before the fruit-time came ;  
Shall summer die when one flower ceases growing ?  
Shall youth's sun darken for one blossom's  
flame ?

Unroll the withered leaves in cynic fashion,  
How slight and frail and poor a thing it seems,  
A broken spray of perishable passion,  
A faded fragile fragment born of dreams.

Now slips it slowly from our languid fingers,  
Let it fall softly—lie between us so ;  
No scent or beauty in it longer lingers,  
See, the wind sweeps it from us—let it go.

Am I the boy who rhymed and sang your praises,  
To reap reward of kisses and soft words ?  
Did we two lie mid blowing grass and daisies,  
And copy in our courtship the wild birds ?

Believe it not ! Those days are dead and over,  
And dead and buried with them are they twain ;  
I have not leisure now to be a lover,  
You would not care to live those days again.

Let who will smile on us as false and fickle ;  
Youth may kiss youth, but age bid age good bye.  
Two lives that touched are sundered by Time's  
sickle,  
To grow apart through all eternity.

Good bye—I do not bid you to remember ;  
I say forget, be happy, so will I.  
'Tis June with us, make merry ere December  
Make most of youth, love lightly, and good bye !

---

## IN THE SHADOW.

IS Life's noontide glory then so soon diminished ?  
Are they finished  
All the loves and laughters seeming scarce begun ?  
Are they done ?  
Is it evening verily that closes  
O'er the roses,  
Or a summer cloudlet passing o'er the sun ?

For I stand in sudden darkness black and lonely,  
Hearing only  
The long long shuddering sigh of a lost wind down  
the night,  
And the light  
Of the royal sun at noontide has been driven  
Out of heaven,  
And life's glory, joy, and loveliness with him have  
taken flight.

Night at noontide—plague of darkness, starless,  
moonless—  
And the tuneless



Long, long shuddering sigh goes wailing down the  
waste—

Shall I taste

Life's bright wine of sunshine now no more for  
ever?

Is't the Giver

Of the darker drink whose pinions hither haste?

Stand thou firm, my spirit—wait the answer tear-  
less,

Calm and fearless,

Till the cloud pass from thee, or evening's doubt-  
ful light

Turn to night.

Quail not, hope not, seek no vain assurance,

In endurance

Be thy trust—for that alone is infinite.

---

Of this life's land my feet have little hold,  
And my heart is sick and weary and grown old,

And alway alway 'twixt the light and me  
Lies Death's impenetrable shadow cold.

And so I make indeed but evil cheer,  
And sing sad songs that few men care to hear,

Trying to drown in their monotony  
The sense of a monotony more drear.

I would not sing if elsewhere I might gain  
Physic to sooth my sickness and my pain,  
But song it seems at my worst hour's worst need,  
Is the only opiate that can calm my brain.

Therefore have patience friends, and curse me not,  
Who am already cursed enough, God wot.

I do not ask you these sad songs to heed,  
Or to condole with me on my hard lot.

But pass your way, and spare the good advice,  
Stifle the sermon and the comment wise,  
Refrain from ominous wagging of your heads,  
Repress the tears that would o'erbrim your eyes,

And let me sing my sad songs as I will.  
A little while and I shall lie quite still  
On the only one of all my earthly beds,  
Where I shall sleep, nor dream, nor wake to ill.

And if I choose that little while to spend  
In singing songs whereunto few attend,  
How irks it you? Go on your several ways,  
Our paths need never mingle till the end.

---

I seem as one swept down a stream by night,  
'Twixt the dark banks with here and there a light,  
All that he knows is left afar, ashore—  
He is borne onwards to the infinite.

Yea, the known fades—the last pale lights are  
gone,  
And Fate's resistless tide streams strenuous on,  
Only the sense of a vast sea before  
Fills all my soul ; I shall rest there anon.

---

How the mad music thrills the scented air,  
How the dance whirls, and in the ballroom's glare  
How flash the diamonds and the ladies' eyes,  
And how the merriment mocks my despair.

Morn's foot is on the cold dew-whitened grass,  
Morn's breath upon the pale flowers as I pass,  
Morn's wan first smile is in the eastern skies,  
And morn for me a tender message has.

I hear her whispering from the shadowy trees,  
" Child, these were not for thee, nor thou for  
these,

Thy life, like vapour in cross-blasts of Fate,  
Hither and thither driven, found no peace.

" But now the winds are still, and peace is near ;  
Faint gleam the lights, faint sounds the music  
here,

And the glare and tumult of thy life abate  
As Death's dawn rises beautiful and clear."

'Twere better, being sentenced thus to Death,  
To spend the poor remainder of my breath  
Not in arraignment nor upbraiding vain,  
Of Fate that never heareth what man saith,

Nor in lament for hours that fled too fast,  
Nor in repentance for the pleasant past,  
Nor coward fear of never-ending pain,  
Nor selfish prayer for heavenly peace at last ;

But in calm doing of what good may lie  
About the path I tread going forth to die ;  
To suffer all the torture nor complain,  
This were a hero's part—no hero I !

I do regret the merry loves of yore,  
The dalliance and delight now done and o'er,  
The star-bright eyes I shall not see again,  
The laughing lips that I shall kiss no more ;

The hurry and the turmoil of my life,  
The passionate rapture of successful strife,  
The patient labour of the busy brain,  
The unsung songs wherewith the air was rife ;

The vice—the virtue—yea, the sin and shame,  
Remorse, contrition, burning thirst for fame,  
One as the other I regret them all,  
And care not who may laugh or who may blame.

Earth is my mother—none I know beside—  
And she shall give me whatsoe'er betide

When Fate's last blow upon my head shall fall,  
Some quiet place in her calm breast to hide.

And after?—O, I know not nor have care,  
I have no longing for the upper air,

Nor high discourse among the saints above,  
Nor songs of seraphs, nor much praise and prayer.

Such as I am—O Earth thy earthy son—  
To thee from whom I came when life begun,

To thee alone with reverence and with love,  
I would return when that brief life is done.

---

## A NIGHT RHAPSODY.

THE wind is abroad in the night,  
The poplars whiten and shake,  
The moon shines bright and white,  
And who could be aught but awake?  
The bright moon swims through the blue-green  
sky,  
The leaves of the poplars murmur and sigh,  
The leaves of the poplars whisper and sing,  
And call to the wind as the wind goes by,  
Fanning the night with his wide soft wing;  
And glad is the wind's reply.

No night for slumber is this—  
A night to be up and away  
Where the sea is rolled in a tide of gold  
Under the full moon's ray;  
To fly with the wind till the cleft waves hiss  
From the racing prow each way,  
Where the tumult of winds and of waters is  
Over the sounding bay.

And the sails in the moonlight shine,  
The flashing foam flies free,  
The land is a long low line,  
The gunwale scoops the brine,  
And the air is stronger than wine,  
And lords of the night are we.

But we pace the streets that are dumb,  
Save for our steady tread,  
And the wild wind's roar and hum,  
And the sound of the trees o'erhead.  
Men sleep, or are drunk or dead !  
We wake and are living, we two,  
With the wind and the moon and the stars,  
And the living and waking night ;  
We who have broken through  
Custom's chains and her bars,  
Who live in the hag's despite,  
Nor care for her wrong or right ;  
She who obscures and mars  
Nature in all men's sight.  
Lo, night's vast palace of blue,  
Shot through with wonderful light ;  
Lo, the wheeling worlds o'erhead,  
But men are asleep or dead,  
We only are waking, we two,  
With the wind and the moon and the stars,  
And the living and waking night.

Who lives in the garish day,  
Mid the smoke and the clamour of wheels,  
While the worship of Mammon goes on alway,  
And man lives only to make life pay,  
And the brain of the City reels  
With millions of figures in long array,  
With which one conjures until he feels  
A mere machine made of senseless clay,  
With a brain of clock-work wheels  
To cypher for others? Who lives, I say  
In the cyphering City in garish day?  
'Tis night that the soul reveals.

By day to lie, and to buy and sell  
Each one must be an infidel,  
But now, 'neath this silent, calm, pure sky,  
One could almost believe, did he care to try,  
In God and in Immortality;  
And dream, if we rightly understood  
This life of ours and had eyes to see,  
That all things work together for good,  
And that evil good in the end shall be.

But we, my comrade, we—  
Under Religion's ban,  
Under the frown of the priest,  
And the multitude's laughing scorn—  
With faces turned to the East,



Watch for the light of the coming morn  
That shall shine on the life of man.  
Of Death and its dim hereafter  
Let others ponder who can ;  
We would see in this earth of ours,  
Verily here while we live,  
Each sharing the love and laughter,  
The blossoms and fruit and flowers,  
The hopes and pleasures, the sun and showers  
That the gracious earth doth give.  
The journey's end is beyond our ken,  
We would soften the journeying ;  
For Life is the servant and slave of men,  
But Death is their lord and King,  
Whom none shall soften by craft or skill,  
Or cozen to break his trust,  
Or conquer by strength, but he ruleth still,  
And we 'neath his rod are dust.  
And what is his secret we cannot tell,  
But this it seemeth is so—  
We've a fruitful earth whereon to dwell,  
And whether there be a heaven or hell,  
Or neither, or both, and more as well,  
We mortals shall never know  
Till life be done, and out of the sun  
To the under-world we go.  
If we missed of mirth in the life on earth  
We shall find it not there I trow.

There are many who miss it, and few who find,  
Diseased and crippled, and deaf and blind,  
In hunger and dirt and cold,  
Swarming like vermin the myriads lie,  
And sin and sorrow and curse and die ;  
And earth is full of their bitter cry,  
Unanswered from of old.  
The festering alley—the crowded street—  
The wan face of the child—  
The reeking court—O moonlight sweet,  
O heaven undefiled—  
Red should ye be with the blood of man,  
And black with his sin and shame,  
If these who were born and have lived 'neath a ban,  
A hopeless curse for their whole lives' span,  
Are but food in the end for flame.

Shall we believe it? Nay, friend ; not we !  
For the priest may preach and the bigot rave,  
But to keep its secret whate'er it be,  
We can trust the grave ;  
And so fight on in the endless strife,  
And neither faint nor fly ;  
And fearlessly having in life served life,  
At life's end shall as fearlessly die.

My rhapsody ends. O friend, good bye !  
For now 'neath the sky-line far  
Somewhere stirreth the Day ;

Star dies out after star,  
The moon has withered away ;  
The festival lights are taken  
E'er the torches of Day are come ;  
The palace of Night is shaken,  
The harps of the winds are dumb ;  
The doom of the Queen is spoken,  
Its sentences glow on her wall ;  
The rod of her power is broken,  
She tottereth to her fall.

Night from her throne is hurled,  
The rebel hath clutched the crown ;  
Yet palely he glares o'er the world,  
To see if it smile or frown.  
Courage he soon shall gather,  
The earth shall applaud the wrong,  
Hailing her King and Father  
With a million-throated song.

We will not join in his praises,  
Nor worship before his throne ;  
Such rule as the despot Day's is  
Is fitted for slaves alone.  
We will make us a darkened palace,  
And faith with the fallen keep,  
And rue Queen shall pour from her chalice  
The heavenly wine of sleep.

And the rebel may vaunt his splendour,  
And scatter his gold above,  
We will worship our goddess tender,  
In the darkness she doth love.

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## A. LEGEND.

SHE was his own a few short summer days,  
And his feet moved in Love's delicious ways,  
His hands plucked Love's fair flowers a little  
space ;  
And his soul drank the beauty of her face—  
A god-wrought cup that held a draught divine—  
Drank deep, and gladdened as with glorious wine.  
For all her beauty it was only his ;  
Her body to embrace, her lips to kiss ;  
Her bosom his head's pillow, and her hair  
Gold guerdon for life's toil ; and none might share  
These with him ; many a time each day,  
Gazing upon her beauty, would he say,  
In tones love-drowned and low, *She is mine own ;*  
*Body and spirit mine, and mine alone.*  
*What have I done that Fate to me hath given*  
*A prize so splendid that the kings of heaven*  
*Seeing, desire it and grow envious ;*  
*Yet watching us with hot eyes amorous.*  
*Find never way whereby to separate*  
*For all their powerless love, and helpless hate ?*

So spake he boastful in his happy love ;  
While the gods laughed to hear in heaven above.

And merrily the sweet days fled and passed ;  
For these two lovers fleeting all too fast.  
And Pleasure's chalice, brimming with the bright  
Sweet nectar of Desire and of Delight,  
Was ever at their lips ; nor thought they then  
They could be mortal as the sons of men ;  
But when in misty summer-morning calms  
At last sleep found them in each other's arms,  
They dreamed that in Elysian fields above  
Death had been overcome and slain of Love.  
Slept, glad to sleep, now sleep could not divide ;  
Woke, glad to waken by each other's side ;  
And knew no grief, for grief with Death had died.

But the gods willed that they must part full soon.  
Before the sweetness of the honeymoon  
Had time to pall upon them, while as yet  
Unto the brimming cup their lips were set,  
With love fulfilled, but still insatiate,  
The gods he jeered at bade them separate.  
Yea, they must part a while, a little while ;  
Her lips left kissing—on her face the smile  
Died. "O Love, so brief a space!" said he ;  
And so upon his bosom weeping she

At last sighed out consent with faltering tongue ;  
Then clasped and kissed him wildly, and they  
clung

Locked long and closely in a fast embrace ;  
Bosom to bosom, face to tearful face,  
Till from her arms he tore himself, and fled.

Then fell she to the earth as one falls dead :  
And all day wept for him, and in the night  
From her couch started in a wild affright  
Calling his name, stretching her arms all bare  
Into the pallid moonlight, cold and fair,  
To clasp him ; yet he came not ; then she drew  
The curtains o'er her face, and wept night through.  
And in the morning rose up pale and sad,  
And sick with weeping, she that was so glad  
A few hours past that she had idly thought  
The summer birds looked envy on her lot.  
Now were her cheeks by midnight tears made  
wan ;

Now from the summer all the sun was gone,  
And from the flowers all fairness ; she beheld  
The glowing garden, and her tears upwelled  
And burst afresh, and fell in tender rain ;  
For sweetest things to sorrow give most pain.  
Then as she gazed through a watery mist,  
As in a dream, it seemed her lips were kissed

So as none ever kissed them saving he ;  
And blushing and all tremulous with glee,  
In that sweet moment coy no more I wis,  
But glad to court a longer, closer kiss—  
Stretched her white throat, to meet the cold rough  
stone,

And woke from that dear dream unkissed, alone.  
Then none could comfort her or soothe her woe.

And the intolerable hours dragged dull and slow ;  
Day wore in weariness and sick desire,  
And longing keen that burns the heart like fire,  
To night more sick and weary than the day.

While he, half mad with grief he went his way,  
With furious speed, impatient of delay,  
That he might sooner clasp again his bride,  
Laugh o'er his perils at her sweet, sweet side,  
Forget in kisses vanished pain and trouble,  
And taste Love's bliss by abstinence made double.  
But all his soul was sick with nameless fears,  
And wheresoe'er he went within his ears  
Her last wild cry rang always, and her face,  
Wan with much weeping, shone in every place,  
And would not be shut out. Aye, though he swore  
In three short days I shall return once more  
To thee, my sweet, who keep'st meanwhile my heart,  
And we will never dwell one hour apart



Again in death or life,—his breast was full  
Of feverish terror that no words could lull,  
And dark foreboding as a shadow lay  
Across his path that long unhappy day,  
And in the night strange phantoms grim and pale  
Around him hovered, and made funeral wail ;  
And wrung lean hands, and tore their dusty hair,  
Sighing farewells, that mingled in the air  
With death-dull muffled music of despair.  
And when it died there was the weird moonlight,  
And silence.

Until cleaving the clear night,  
Made shrill and keen by agony, there came  
A voice—her voice—that shrieked aloud his name,  
And cried for help, but ere he could reply,  
A burst of hideous laughter drowned the cry ;  
And he fell swooning to the ground, nor woke  
From his deep trance till the dim morning broke.  
Nor dared he any more court sleep, but through  
Darkness and daylight on his way he flew ;  
And by his side through darkness and through  
day  
Fear's pallid shade did sit and sob alway.

His journey's end was reached at length ; he  
turned  
His horses homeward with a heart that yearned

Bitterly in his breast for love and fear;  
And never had his lady seemed so dear  
To him as now, never so far away;  
He cursed the lonely night, the barren day;  
He loathed the laughter of the sunlit sky;  
O gods, to kiss her yet once more! To lie  
Circled by her white arms! To feel her mouth  
Against his parched lips soothe their fiery  
drouth;  
And with love's fever coursing through each vein,  
To kiss his soul out on her lips again!  
But as he drew near Paris and his bride,  
The hope that in his heart had well nigh died  
Arose again, and soothed his troubled breast  
With sweet foreshadowings of a peaceful rest;  
A long deep rest with her from pain and toil,  
Where there should come no earthly thing to soil  
Or stain the purity of their repose;  
But with the scent of lily and of rose,  
The tones of her sweet harp on summer eves  
Should steal between the musical dim leaves,  
While they lay there with Love in summer bowers,  
And kissed and murmured with the murmuring  
flowers.

Then in the distance did fair Paris rise;  
And he began to plan a sweet surprise

For his loved lady ; he would hurry there  
With secret speed, and join her unaware,  
Crowning his queen with sudden kisses gay  
While she yet mourned, and thought him far  
away.

And on he sped with all his soul aflame,  
And his lips quivering with her tuneful name,  
Until his wandering ended, and he stood  
Before his home, with weak heart half subdued  
By too much longing, by desire too keen.

Through the wide porch he sprang, unheard, un-  
seen,

Casting swift glances, passing, at each room.  
Empty they slept in eve's delicious gloom,  
Shaded and cool with rich flowers dimly fair ;  
Yet to his eyes they all were desert-bare,  
She whom he sought, his lady, was not there.  
With feverish haste he searched the still halls  
through,

And at each disappointment faster flew,  
Till with heart beating loudly 'gainst his side,  
He reached the sacred room where slept his bride,  
And stood some brief space listening at the door.  
Harken ! A footstep—sure his pain is o'er !  
Enters he quickly, mad with thirst for love ;  
And the gods laughed to see in heaven above.

Part the thick curtains to his trembling hands ;  
Joyful within the well-known room he stands ;  
The blessèd hour is come for which he prayed,  
And sure for all his misery he is paid.  
Within his breast a glorious passion glows ;  
A treble guerdon for all banished woes.  
His blood beats time to love's delicious tune,  
Whose melody he shall perfect full soon ;  
He murmurs her dear name above his breath.

A faint sick odour full of dread and death,  
And loathsome pestilence and new-spilt blood.  
Gloom, and one standing where he oft hath stood  
In spirit, bowed above her sacred bed.  
Under the dainty linen, now stained red,  
The ruin lies that was Love's temple fair.  
Yet moves he not ; the deadly stifling air,  
The awful fume of Death and Pestilence,  
Like a grave-cloth hath bound each shuddering  
sense.

\* \* \* \* \*

Dead—dead ! Past from him to a shadowy land !  
The lips he longed for, and the welcoming hand  
That he had dreamed of hourly, even these  
Made loathsome to him by a foul disease.

That face, his heaven of beauty and delight,  
Prey for the grave's cursed worm ; and all the  
bright

And living wealth of golden glowing hair,  
As a gold vessel had been broken there—  
In blood-stained tresses ruinously spread ;  
The crown is tarnished, and the queen is dead.

And the sweet snowy neck he kissed so oft ;  
Fragrant and white as lilies pure and soft ;  
Shut out that last dread sight ! Blood every-  
where !

His eyes see nought but blood in all the air.  
And the faint scent of it, and its dull stain  
Burn like a fire within his reeling brain,  
The one word *dead*, and the one thought *no more*.

Then a thick heavy sanguine cloud rolled o'er  
His senses, numbing them like a long draught  
Of some dull poison in delirium quaffed ;  
And Death's cold hands stretched for a second  
prey.

\* \* \* \* \*

Yet not on this wise did he die men say,  
But passed to Death-in-Life ; nor smiled nor spake  
Again for ever ; but for her sweet sake

Wore out his days in silent voiceless prayer,  
Far from the sunshine and the summer air,  
In a deep cell—a cold bare tomb of stone—  
For ever and for evermore alone,  
Till pity touched some high god's iron breast,  
And in the Eternal Silence he found rest.

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## THE CRAVEN'S TRAGEDY.

*In an English Castle.*—SIR EDGAR TRESILIAN,  
LILIAN, *his wife*, PHILIP, *his brother*.

LADY TRESILIAN—Must you indeed go forth to-day?

SIR EDGAR—

Aye, so.

I have not been beyond the drawbridge, sweet,  
For four long days, and all the air is loud  
With threatening thunder that the wind of war  
Blows hitherward; none knows from day to day  
What storm may break or where; it is wild  
weather,

And there be words of pennons in the woods,  
And gleams of steel by moonlight on the hills,  
And scouts go out, and are not seen again.  
I know not what it means—I cannot trust  
To hearsay.

LADY TRESILIAN—Cannot Philip go to-day?

SIR EDGAR—Philip? To-day? What ails you,  
Lilian?

Nay, lift your head, and speak.



LADY TRESEILIAN— O, my good lord,  
If you know not what ails me, none should  
know.

SIR EDGAR—Aye, aye, I had forgot. To-day,  
indeed.

What a dolt am I! This news hath wildered me.  
Yet must I go ; but I will use all haste.  
Nay, weep not, keep good heart—

LADY TRESEILIAN— Your promises !

SIR EDGAR—Truth there were two, and there's the  
trouble on't.

I promised Phil to go, and you to stay ;  
I cannot choose but lie to one of you—  
There's still the question which one : if to Phil  
He shall look scornful, mutter mutinously,  
And fling off for his armour—some half word  
Of anger spoken louder as he goes  
That it may rankle. Surely I can bear  
That much ! But you will weep and weep,  
And your sad face will haunt me everywhere  
With dumb reproach. By God, I will not go !  
I will send brother Philip. I'll not part  
From thee an hour until this trouble's over,  
Let come what may.

LADY TRESEILIAN— My very tender love !

SIR EDGAR—Now I'll to Philip straight, and send  
him forth.



*In the Castle.*—SIE EDGAR and PHILIP meeting.

PHILIP—Brother, not armed? The horses wait without;

The men are ready. Arm thyself in haste;  
There is more news: A peasant hath come in,  
Who, gathering fuel in our very woods,  
Was taken prisoner by three horsemen, hurried  
But an hour's ride, he saith, along the river,  
To where the meads were white with tents for miles.

SIE EDGAR—Then shall the lying knave besoundly whipped.

Give him two stripes for every tent he saw,  
Or says he saw. Doth not the wind blow east?

PHILIP—So was he brought before the General,  
O'er whose tent flapped a banner in the wind,  
By the which he knew it for the General's tent—

SIE EDGAR—Nay, but south-west, and cloudy.  
Rain ere long.

PHILIP—Who, after putting to him some few questions,

Was pleased to say he was an arrant fool,  
Or arrant knave, or still more likely, both  
Together—

SIE EDGAR—Yea now, this indeed rings true.

SIR EDGAR—  
I do not need my armour.

SIR EDGAR— But, my good Philip,  
Had you not been so full of prate till now,  
I had told you that I go not forth to-day.  
Well, sir, are you sick that you do stare thus  
strangely?

SIR EDGAR— What, heard you not?  
PHILIP—I hope I heard not rightly.

You do presume on your relationship.  
Once more for all, I go not forth to-day ;  
But I command you straight to don your armour  
And lead these men who wait outside for me.  
Dost hear? Despatch, on pain of my dis-  
pleasure.

PHILIP—Of thy displeasure, marry—and despatch?  
Art thou drunk or raving? Canst thou see and  
hear?

I am not thy page, not yet a waiting-woman,  
Nor one who knows so little of you, brother,  
As to fear you, howsoe'er you bluster.  
I know you, violent, weak, and changeable,  
Turned from your steadiest purpose by a whim,  
An evil omen, or, most weak of all,  
A breeding woman's word. Nay, do not rave,  
Thou know'st me, too, and so it skills not : see,  
I have had some truths upon my lips to tell you  
These many days. Now they shall out, by God !  
Though you go mad to hear them ; stamp and  
strut,  
Bring down your brows, scowl darkly as you  
will,  
And fold your arms most bravely, you shall  
hear

What some men say of you—what many think,  
And do not say : You are too much lover  
Too little soldier for these times of storm ;  
And this rough rock against whose iron base  
War's ruddy waves have foamed so long in vain,  
Whose grey old crest doth cleave the thunder-  
cloud,  
And bid defiance to the lightning, now,

---

'Though outwardly as proud and strong as ever,  
Hath a maggot in't just where its core should  
be.

There are who say this eyrie was not meant  
For a pigeon-house, or a dovecote, or a hen-  
roost;

'Tis somewhat high indeed for barn-door fowls,  
Who would do well to seek their native dung-  
hill,

'They and their chicks, or addled eggs as may be,  
And leave this pinnacle to its proper eagles.

'They breed on this wise—one doth hatch the  
eggs

And rear the brood, and one doth fly abroad  
To forage or to fight, as luck will have it,  
If luck be kind to fight and forage too.

He doth not sit and watch his mate, good  
brother;

He doth not—

SIR EDGAR—Peace. Get you to your chamber;

I will send a guard that you be not disturbed.

You are too old for whipping, and too young  
For hanging; natheless I will do my best  
Someway to suit your merits and your age.

Speak you no more if you love living. Go!

[*Exit* PHILIP.

Was ever man tormented as am I?

Plagued by his foes and hampered by his friends,  
With murmuring soldiers, starving peasantry,  
More quarrels on his hands than he remembers ;  
For wife, a most unreasonable woman,  
Who chooses this of all times to lie in ;  
A beardless brother, who, to make return  
For favours past of houseroom, food, and  
    clothing,  
Takes him to task most soundly for his folly—  
Yea, gibes him bitterly, and nicknames him  
Maggot and barn-door fowl, and doth infer,  
Poor callow gosling, he himself is eaglet.  
I cannot punish him—the soldiers love him ;  
I cannot scare him, nor know I who can.

[*Re-enter* PHILIP.

Are you sick of life or come you for my pardon ?

PHILIP—Nor one nor other ; I shall die not yet,  
And sue for pardon never. I come not  
To speak now for myself, but this same message  
Brought by the peasant from your enemy  
Lies on my conscience ; if you care to hear  
I will deliver it ; if you bid me go  
I will obey you, silent, and your blood  
Be on your own head only.

SIR EDGAR—Thou may'st speak.

PHILIP—I do not thank thee ; wert thou not my  
    brother

Thou should'st not wring speech from me. As  
 thou art,  
 And giv'st thy gracious leave, now hear thy foe :  
 The peasant saith these were his very words :—  
*Tell thou thy lord to bid farewell to life ;  
 Tell him the Butcher cometh as he promised,  
 His reckoning is long, he comes for payment ;  
 Nor will he turn again till he hath written  
 A full receipt for it, and all in blood.  
 Tell him that if I take him prisoner  
 Most surely I will hang him like a thief ;  
 But if, as I suspect, he dares not venture  
 Beyond his moat, then I will burn his Castle,  
 And him and his together.*

Word for word,  
 The peasant saith. And now will I to prison.  
 I shall not need a guard, sir, and maybe  
 Your'll want your soldiers for more stirring  
 business.

(*Aside*) The arrow hath gone home; this  
 Butcher's bill  
 Is evil paying!

[*Exit.*

SIR EDGAR—The Butcher ! Philip ! Gone—curse  
 him, curse all !

Curse most the luckless day that I was born !  
 Stephen with all his army in the valley—

Then am I lost—lost—lost ! But Philip lies,  
 The peasant lies, all lie. I'll hang the peasant ;  
 Philip shall go to prison underground ;  
 I think they shall forget to send him food.  
 I'll have no liars here to make men cravens.  
 And yet, the Butcher—how could the knave  
     know

That nickname ? He shall eat his lies  
 Before he hangs. Who waits without ?

[*Enter ATTENDANT.*

Send here

The peasant who hath late come in with news.

[*Exit ATTENDANT.*

I'll winnow truth from error ere I've done,  
 I warrant him.

*In the Castle.*—SIR EDGAR, *armed*, and LADY  
                                   TRESILIAN.

LADY TRESILIAN—Then you must go, indeed ! God  
     send you back  
 Safely ere nightfall !

SIR EDGAR—                  When I come, perchance,  
 You shall not be so lonely ; there shall nestle  
 One on your bosom, sweetest, of whom I  
 Shall not be jealous—one whose right is stronger  
 Even than mine to that soft resting place.

LADY TRESILIAN—I pray you, go. My heart breaks  
all this while.

I would you were gone that I might weep a  
little.

O, Love, I am grown a coward on a sudden;  
When you come back I think you shall find me  
dead.

The Shadow of Death stands 'twixt me and the  
sun,

I felt it chill my blood as our lips touched.

SIR EDGAR—Yea, and you trembled; 'tis but your  
sick fancy;

You shall do well anon, fear not—fear not!

Dear love, you are only woman after all!

I do but ride to the top of Kynton Crag,

O'erlook from thence the Valley of the Spay,

And then ride back, to calm these fools of ours

Who are sorely shaken by a peasant's lies.

LADY TRESILIAN—Aye, sorely shaken seem they  
all in truth.

My women whisper much among themselves

With anxious faces, and when I draw nigh

Are stricken dumb, or comment on the weather

With carelessness most wofully ill-acted,

Or piteous merriment more sad than weeping;

Or try to sing, and swiftly ceasing, choke.

Then follow coughs and blame of the east wind;



And all the while they only are deceived  
In dreaming they deceive. But Mistress:  
Romney

Hath said I must be cheerful, and her word  
Is law, which I'd give something to obey.  
But ah, I have small cheer, and evil dreams.

SIR EDGAR—Sweet, fare you well—one kiss.  
Nay, keep good heart!

Nay, loose me—take your cheek from this cold  
steel—

Sweet, sweet, take courage!

LADY TRESILIAN— O, last night I dreamed  
That you were dead. Now, if you come not back:  
Ere nightfall, I shall know the dream is true.  
Then I shall die, and seek you where you are  
With our dead child. Your lips are warm and  
soft—

Kiss me once more. Are mine not cold and  
white?

SIR EDGAR—Nay, verily! But, love, I must begone.

LADY TRESILIAN—You are in haste, I think you are  
glad to go.

Is there not grave dust clinging to my lips?

SIR EDGAR—Well, if there be, see, I will kiss it off.

LADY TRESILIAN—There is blood on yours—how  
came it? Kiss me not!

SIR EDGAR—Love, you are sick; there is nor dust  
nor blood.

**Fare you well.**

I cannot bear the creaking of your armour,

SIR EDGAR—Now I can 'scape, and send her women  
to her.

Her fancies make my blood cold.

Thou art not gone! O God, I am forsaken!

SIR EDGAR—Nay, not forsaken, pray you dear, be still;

You shall rouse the soldiers if you shriek thus loudly.

**LADY TRESELIAN**—The soldiers! There is treachery I know.

I hear them whispering in every corner,

**You are sold—they count the money they were paid**

For your life; they ring each piece upon the  
stones

Lest they be cheated. Some ring true, and  
some

Clank dully, as 'twere death-bells mixed with  
marriage

By some mistake o' the ringers.

[Enter MISTRESS ROMNEY.

Mother, mother—

They told me that you died when I was born.

How come you here?

MISTRESS ROMNEY—Aye, pretty one, all's well.

Go, get you gone, sir, you are full as useless

Here in your armour as a cat in jack boots

When mice are peering through the wainscot  
chinks.

The man is mazed. Sir, you are in the way.

Ride you to Kynton; in some four hours' space,

When you come back, you shall find yourself a  
father,

And feel as proud as though you had done a  
deed

That few 'mong men had wit or courage for,

'Stead of—

[Exit SIR EDGAR.

So he is well despatched,

Good lack, she hath fainted—now there's business  
toward.

STEPHEN's tent in the Valley. STEPHEN writing.

Before him two TROOPERS and SIR EDGAR, a  
prisoner.

STEPHEN—Aye, 'twas done bravely; you shall be  
remembered.

Wait you without a while, not beyond call;



And let none enter until I give signal.

[*Exit* TROOPERS.]

So, sir, your luck has played you false at last,  
And Fate's strange see-saw sends me upward  
now —

You down as low as Hell, if I mistake not.  
Last bout 'twas otherwise. How fares your  
lady,

The Lily that we fought for, not with swords  
And in no tourney lists, yet fiercely still,  
And that you won, and wear before the world  
With such applause ?

Nay, be not sullen.

The soldier, sir, the steel-true valiant soldier  
Takes Fortune's buffets, as he takes her smile  
Equally, is not cast down nor exalted  
By either overmuch. You have been favoured,  
You have known months worth many barren  
lives,

You and the Lily that you won and wear.

Now you are miserable, and like to die—

Yea, but why murmur? You have had your  
day ;

I would change places with you by the Lord,  
And so die, laughing at Fate over-reached,  
Who had done her worst, yet left me much in  
hand,

If I could look back from the brink of death,  
As you can do, o'er one long year of heaven.

SIR EDGAR (*aside*)—It cannot be God means **this**  
for the end.

Death has looked on me oft yet turned aside.  
I shall live to tell this story to my son  
In years to come ; his words are full of Death,  
But he smiles gaily ; I will be most humble.  
(*Aloud*). Is it well done of you to mock the  
fallen ?

STEPHEN—I mock you not, but if I mocked, Sir  
Knight,

You are scarce the one to minister reproof.  
At whiles of late I have grown a visionary.  
Hark you now to a dream I oft have dreamed.

Meseems I make one of a cavalcade  
So bright and gay it turns the bridle-path  
Through the dim wood to a flashing belt of  
gems.

We go a hawking to the vale beyond —  
The Lady Lilian and her mimic court,  
Her lovers and her ladies, and their loves,  
And more besides ; the Lady Lilian rides  
First with the comely stranger from the south,  
Soft-tongued and sleek of face, and full of  
smiles.

Men say he was born a courtier, like enough !  
He can smile and flatter, play fine tricks with  
words,  
And jape and jest, and sing his own love-songs  
While his white fingers scarcely touch the lute,  
Yet summon all its music as by magic.  
So these ride first, and after them, alone,  
Someone ill-used as yet to second place.  
Do you remember? Yea, 'tis plain you do.  
You did not whisper when you mocked the fallen,  
And you mocked well, and mocked me out of  
love,  
And charmed my lady from me. They are fools  
These women, and love smoothness and good  
looks,  
And civil speeches. Yet she had been mine  
Had you not come betwixt us, yea to you  
She praised me oft I know, which praise you  
turned  
Most skilfully, men tell me, to my hurt;  
Brave? Without doubt—'tis pity he's a boor.  
True? Men may see truth thronèd in his eyes;  
'Tis strange how good is alway mixed with evil,  
Brave, yet so bloody that men call him Butcher,  
True as sword steel, and crueller than Death.  
So stabbed you, not with steel, words are more  
keen,

And they give wounds that fester. You had  
best

Have kept to love and lute-playing, leaving war  
To harder hearts, the sword to stronger hands.  
In Love's fair field, with slander for your  
weapon,

I found you all invincible ; we fought—  
You won, I lost, and bore my wounds away  
Without complaint, and nursed my shame alone.  
Now 'tis my turn.

SIE EDGAR (*aside*)— And he remembers all.

Nay then, if I would live no time's to lose.

—You do me wrong, sir, grievous, grievous,  
wrong,

Unwittingly I doubt not ; enemies  
Have been at work upon my character.  
I ever held you bravest of the brave,  
But merciful as all the bravest are.


'Tis true that we were rivals once in love—

That without swords we fought—but, sir, I  
swear

I did but use fair weapons. If I say  
I honoured you both then and always, that  
I do now honour—

STEPHEN—Yea, then you would lie,

As you have lied already. You mistake,  
You do not see your danger, nor know me.



Listen, my mind at present is made up  
To hang you ; you're already tried and sentenced—

Have been so long. You would not fight with  
me

Then when I challenged you ; excused yourself  
I know not how. I do not hang brave men,  
Be they friends or foes, or knights or men-at-  
arms,

But I hang thieves and villains, curs, and  
cowards ;

Therefore you stand abundantly condemned  
To swing at once, but in my clemency  
I choose to give you one more chance of life.

Now, lies and flattery will not serve nor save  
you,

Mark it ; and know that if you long for life,  
If you desire to breathe free air again,  
Or feel the blessed sunlight, or to hear  
The clash of steel once more, or the great shock  
Of meeting armies 'neath the echoing sky,  
Or—for perchance I range too far afield  
For you—if you would see your infant  
That is unborn yet promised, and would watch  
The maiden bud grow to the perfect rose  
Of motherhood in her you love, by God



'Twere best you spoke me but the bare blunt  
truth.

For there are just two words from me between  
You and your death, and I am called a Butcher.  
Your life is worth but little—waste not breath ;  
If you can say aught true and to the purpose,  
Say on, touch but this heart of mine and live.  
A heart of stone, men say, but be not troubled  
I do believe 'tis soft, and full of pity,  
Which shall flow forth if thou hast faith and  
fortune,

As from the rock when smitten by the prophet  
Gushed forth a healing spring there in the  
desert.

Now be thou Moses—smite, I say, and spare not.  
SIR EDGAR (*aside*)—His tender mercies, O my  
God, are cruel.

Thou, only Thou, canst save me ; in his eyes  
I read my doom, and know my hour is come  
Unless Thou help me ; of myself, O Lord,  
I can do nothing. Be Thou with me now  
For her sake.

Surely I could die unmoved  
Did thoughts of her not turn me chicken-  
hearted.

No man save he has ever called me coward—  
I come of a race of warriors ; 'tis not fear

But love that makes me shudder, and my tongue  
Cleave to my mouth, and all my joints wax weak.  
I have been valorous oft enough in fight,  
I have felt the battle-passion in my veins,  
The mad delight in strife, the thirst for blood,  
The exultation that makes leap the heart  
In the thick of the fray, the roaring gate of  
Death,

Where each seems struggling but to enter first.  
Aye, I have been there oft ; I am no coward ;  
That had been found out long ago in me.  
Yet my voice fails me when I try to speak,  
And on my throat there seems a clutch of iron  
That chokes the words back—makes me catch  
my breath,

And turns my speech to a sob ; yet I could die  
As a man should, if—Ah, it matters not—  
If he dies he dies, and there's an end of all.  
And I shall die ; this Butcher means to kill me.  
O Lily, you have kissed me the last time.  
I shall not see our child. How knew he of it ?  
There be spies in the Castle ! Treachery !  
It matters not to me, nor can I mend it.  
I have to die—let my thoughts be of that !

He sits and writes now as he had forgotten  
Me and all else but what he writes. I wonder

If I could reach my dagger they have left  
Under my doublet, and so pounce upon him  
And stab him suddenly to death? I've heard  
The back of the neck's the place.

(*He rushes at STEPHEN and endeavours to stab him,  
but after a short struggle is disarmed.*)

STEPHEN—Nay, not so, Knight!

You'd smite indeed, and let a living spring out,  
Taking my idle words too literally.

But have you more of these same toys about  
you?

Well, I think not—nor here—nor here—so now,  
Having drawn your sting, I'll wait your pleasure  
still.

Many would hang you out of hand at once;  
Many would send you royally to Hell,  
With four good horses tugging different ways;  
But I am pitiful, I wait your pleasure,  
And will not 'gainst what you may urge, re-  
member

This madness for a moment. Sit you down,  
And con your part; when you are ready, speak,  
And I will listen.

SIR EDGAR (*aside*)—All over now—all over! Fool,  
fool, fool!

Would he had killed me when my blood was hot.  
This deadly sickness is far worse than death;  
And I am faint, and tremble like a woman.

He smiles, he writes some bitter jest, I warrant.  
His wit was wont to sting like driven sleet,  
Only he used to be so much in earnest  
That one could laugh him down, and spoil it all  
With easy imperturbability.

I cannot spoil it that way now, God wot.  
I see past every sneer and gibe of mine  
The hempen repartee that ends debate.  
It rests with him, and he will surely use it.  
Aye, I was sick before, now I am dying  
Past help of any medicine. I shall swing  
In the strong wind to-night, face black with  
blood,  
And swollen, hanging sideways helplessly,  
With foolish lolling tongue, and hands a-dangle  
As I have seen some hundreds in my time  
In the war's track, and held my nose to pass.

O God, I cannot bear it! Stephen, Stephen,  
Give me my life! I yield you up the Castle,  
And all that is therein. Give me my life,  
My life, my life, and I will go with you,  
And bid my men to let the drawbridge down,  
And pile their arms, and—  
STEPHEN—But a moment, Knight,  
Why should I not have both? Your life I mean  
And Castle too? What stands there in the  
way?

SIR EDGAR—Strong walls, strong men, deep moats,  
and many swords

Must you encounter ere you win the Castle.

STEPHEN—Nay, for the strong men some of them  
are traitors,

And in my pay. If all goes well, to-morrow  
Will see me lording it within your stronghold.  
But you will not, for you'll be hanged and dead,  
And spared that shame.

SIR EDGAR— O if you let me live,  
I will not cease to pray to God for you,  
That at the judgment He may mete your soul  
Such mercy as you showed me, and you are  
In danger, Stephen, of eternal fire  
For your foul cruelties—

STEPHEN— If you have faith  
In prayer, pray for yourself now, I advise you,  
I think you need the help of heaven most ;  
And for my soul and God we shall do well  
Lacking your help may be, but if not, ill,  
Though you should pray an hundred thousand  
years,  
I doubt not that. You were not used to talk  
So solemnly of God in those old days.

SIR EDGAR—I was a scoffer, yet by God's great  
mercy

I have found grace, and saved my soul alive.

STEPHEN—Then trouble me no more about your body.

Think now, I am about to call two men,  
Stout fellows, tried, and knowing at the work,  
Who shall, with help of a sufficient rope,  
Free that saved soul of yours from this lost  
body,

And introduce you to your fellow saints,  
Whose patience we are trying with delay.

Without there, ho! [*Enter ATTENDANT.*

Send Mark, the hangman, hither,  
With the ill-looking knave who helps him.

[*Exit ATTENDANT.*

SIR EDGAR—

Stephen,

You bloody butcher, is your name not stained  
Deeply enough e'en yet? If I am slain,  
O Stephen, if I die this shameful death,  
This crown and corner-stone of your vile cruelty  
Shall bring the whole vast load of it upon you,  
A thundering avalanche of deadly ruin,  
Heavy enough to bear a world to Hell.  
Smile, you damned bloodhound, vampire, cast-  
off cur,

That haunts the dripping shambles of the world  
For meat and drink, for carrion and blood—

STEPHEN—Hey-day, you haste. You are not carrion  
yet.

All in good time, Sir Knight; and know this  
much,

Mark, 'mongst his other arts, can slit you  
tongues

Most delicately. He's a genius, Mark!

SIR EDGAR—And still he smiles, and he will smile  
me mad.

I have seen a cat play with a mouse this way  
Before she killed it.

STEPHEN— Not so strange i'faith,  
For two days since I watched maybe an hour  
With humble care a cat who'd caught a sparrow,  
Thinking if I took notice I might learn  
Some subtleties of torture from a master  
Born to the art; but I was disappointed,  
For the cat, look you, lacks imagination,  
And might, I speak not vainly, learn of me,  
But I have borrowed touches, like enough.

Thus went the game as far as I remember :  
The sparrow, mad with fear at being caught,  
Yea, all athrob with terror, was held out  
As at arms' length, and patted somewhat  
roughly,

This way and that, from pillar unto post,  
From claw to claw, till he was dazed and dizzy ;  
Then suddenly caught up as though in rapture

Of vast affection, and pressed amorously  
Unto his captor's bosom ; she rolled over,  
Holding him fast still—O, I have it all !  
Squeezed him a little, rumped all his feathers,  
Then cast the wretch contemptuously aside  
As though she wearied ;—cats are much like  
women—

Seemed to forget him altogether, looked  
With pensive interest upon the heaven,  
Till he revived, and, deeming his life spared,  
Stretched one poor dusty wing to fly away,  
When, pounce ! and there the game began again.  
Something monotonous ; were I a cat  
I should want more variety I think.

SIR EDGAR—He is not man ; see now his eyes shoot  
fire,

Green ghastly fire, and his hair rises slowly ;  
The tigerish lips draw back from the white teeth  
That must have human flesh to feed upon.  
I have heard of men who for their many sins  
Are changed to wolves by night, and go abroad  
Howling and scratching over new-made graves,  
Maddening the midnight with their hunting cry,  
As in their hideous packs they sweep afar,  
Lusting for blood till morning makes them men.  
Now, God have mercy, comes his hour of change,  
Now—



STEPHEN—How the dotard crosses him and glares !

What is it that he mutters ? By my soul,  
He will go mad with fear ; then am I cheated.  
I would keep him ever on the verge of madness :  
Not let him over, for once truly mad,  
He's past my power.

Hast thou lost heart so soon ?

Good faith, the sparrow was more stout than  
thou !

SIE EDGAR—Good faith, his enemy was but a cat :

Not a man-wolf, a fiend, a vampire ! Stephen,  
You know the game by heart—God give you joy.  
But I will play no more now for your sport.  
Butcher, you mean to kill me ! Wolf of hell,  
You mean to have my blood ! But you've spare  
time,  
And would amuse yourself—

STEPHEN— It may be so.

I think it is not, but I am not certain.  
That I have had of thee some entertainment  
Is wholly true, yet I am fain to think  
I did not see thereof a prospect when  
I urged thee do thy best to save thy life.  
Thy dagger was thy best, and 'twas not good.  
No, sir, considering all impartially,  
I think thou wrong'st me in this accusation.  
And it may be 'tis thy fault altogether,  
And that thou smit'st amiss, and hast not faith.

Wherefore the water comes not from the rock.  
Or once again—Why say 'tis fault at all?  
Who knows but this was written from the first  
Yea, this decreed before the world began,  
That I should slay thee, thou being born for  
this?

Perchance thy parents or their ancestors  
Committed deadly sin, which now on thee  
By me, God's instrument, must be avenged.  
Think, sir, I pray, each theory's possible,  
None can be proved ; am I then to be blamed  
If I choose one that leaves my character  
Clear of the sanguine stain of cruelty ?

SIR EDGAR—Not heaven itself can cleanse you of  
that stain ;  
You are drunk with human blood. Now, if God  
willed  
He could send fire from heaven and consume  
you,  
Or strike you dead with lightning in a moment,  
Or give you to the worms that fed on Herod,  
And save my life, rid England of a scourge,  
And make no mourners neither. It cannot be  
God sees and knows, or He would do this now.  
Surely He hath forgotten—

STEPHEN— Think you not  
He knoweth that He doth? Wouldst thou  
advise Him?

Where wert thou when He laid the earth's  
foundations ?

And when the morning stars did sing together,  
And all the sons of God shouted for joy  
To see His handiwork ? Then didst thou help ?  
I wis thou wast not even a spectator ;  
And yet 'twas done, one may say, passably.  
He needs thee not ; thou art but as the clay  
A potter pinches from the vessel's lip  
Where 'tis too thick, and casts away, none-  
missing.

Superfluous clay, no more ! I am His sword  
To slay His enemies before His face,  
A fire to burn His foes like stubble. Yea,  
And I will burn and slay till earth be cleansed,  
Which cannot be while thou remain'st upon it.  
SIR EDGAR—He jeers me all this while ; my words  
tell not

More than my dagger told upon his breastplate.

[*Enter MARK the hangman, and ATTENDANT.*

Stephen, I pray you for the love of God  
Send these men forth again some little space,  
Only a brief while—I would speak with thee.  
'Tis life or death ! I had forgot almost—  
'Tis well I did not quite. Hands off, thou knave,  
And here are the foul knaves who do his bidding.  
I would speak with thy master ! Stephen  
Stephen !—

Well smitten, Mark. Now bear him forth and hang him.

[*Exit MARK and ATTENDANT, bearing SIE EDGAR.*  
So now his screams wax fainter. Ah, they cease.  
Mark doth his work most deftly. Mark, much thanks.

It will go forth I have hanged a peerless knight;  
His lady shall be wild I doubt for sorrow.  
He would have sold her for six hours of life;  
A maniac world; blood-letting seems the cure.  
The lady I will comfort in good time  
If God permit.

Now, while my plots mature,  
I'll sleep; 'twill be midnight at earliest  
Ere the hired traitors in the Castle yonder  
Can let the ambush in. Four hours' sweet sleep!  
I thank my God I can sleep peacefully.

STEPHEN'S *Tent.*—STEPHEN *asleep.* *Enter a*  
MESSENGER.

MESSENGER—Rouse you, sir, rouse you!

STEPHEN (*starting up*)—They are in the Castle!

They have done well. Call Guy. Who entered first?

By God, I'll not forget him—And the lady,  
They were right tender with her? Speak, dumb dog.

Stockfish, why gap'st thou, mute?

MESSENGER— I bear ill news.

STEPHEN—If they have bungled they shall die.

MESSENGER— Their bodies

Do now before the gateway block the moat ;

They are all dead.

STEPHEN—Those villains played them false.

Damned double traitors ! Had they each ten  
lives—

MESSENGER—So please you, they've not one. In  
triple rows

They hang without the Castle ; the young  
brother

Of dead Sir Edgar rules within it now,

And breathes death and defiance and revenge.

STEPHEN—Let him breathe what he will while  
breathe he may ;

I will see to it that he breathes not long.

What of the lady ?

MESSENGER—She died in childbed, sir,

Some four hours since.

STEPHEN—Why then—But this is hearsay,

Old women's babble, pages' empty chatter.

Thou canst not know ; thou art a credulous fool.

Get hence, and curb thy tongue.

Stay, thou dull ass.

Was there indeed a rumour of her death ?

MESSENGER—You do me wrong, sir ; I have never  
filled

You ear with idle rumour; from the priest  
Who shrived her ere she died I heard thus  
much:

The babe scarce breathed ere its breath fled for  
ever,

And the poor mother by her grief was crazed,  
And tore her hair, and beat herself, and shrieked  
How that her lord was murdered, none then  
knowing

That he was dead; but last, her strength being  
gone,

She lay some while in silence. Suddenly  
She raised herself, lifted her hands toward  
heaven,

And cried aloud, while those around her quailed  
At her awful voice, *God shall avenge his murder,*  
*And that right speedily,* and fell back dead.

Sir, you are faint; I pray you lean on me.

STEPHEN—Begone! Let none disturb me till I  
call.

O God—O God—

[STEPHEN *falls*.

MESSANGER—God hath avenged him, even as she  
said.

## SONNETS.





## SONNETS.

## THE AGE.

## I.

A PALE and soul-sick woman with wan eyes  
Fixed on their own reflection in the glass,  
Uncertain lips half-oped to say "Alas,  
Naked I stand between two mysteries,  
Finding my wisdom nought who am most wise."  
Behind, the shapes and fiery shadows pass  
Of fervent life ; no joy in them she has,  
But gazing on herself she moans and sighs.

And yet of knowledge she doth hold the key,  
And Power and Pleasure are her handmaidens,  
And all past years have given of their best  
To make her rich and great and strong and free,  
Who stands in slack and listless impotence,  
Marvelling sadly at her own unrest.

## II.

Her children cluster round about her knees ;  
The hoarded wealth and wisdom of the Dead  
Of all past time they have inherited,  
And still within their hands it doth increase ;  
Yet in their eyes is mirrored her dis-peace,  
Her weariness within their hearts is shed ;  
Her dreary sorrow weighs each drooping head,  
And each soul sickens with her fell disease,

Beneath their feet lie many broken toys,  
They are too old to laugh, too wise to pray,  
Or look to God for wage or chastisement :  
They have known all sorrows, wearied of all joys,  
Fed all desires, and none hath said them nay ;  
Two things alone they lack, Peace and Content.

---

## THE PASSION OF LIFE.

THE young year reels in the spring-god's joyous  
train,

Flushed, flower-crowned, drunk with youth's  
strong wine, Delight;

At her fair feet Life's swelling tide foams white,  
Over her sunny head the blossoms rain.

There is no time for tears—no place for pain—

Nor work by day—nor soulless sleep by night,

We are so fulfilled with the rapturous maddening  
might

Of the burning passion of life that thrills each vein.

Strew all the ways, be prodigal of flowers,

There is no end to the wealth that meets us  
here;

Mark ye no more the flight of the hurrying hours,

They but give place that happier may appear.

Let the cymbals clash and the blossoms fall in  
showers,

And dance and sing, for the Spring-god leads  
the year.

## THE PASSION OF DEATH.

**B**UT in mid-revel's maddest mirth and din  
What hideous change comes o'er each form  
and face ?

They fade, they shrink, they shrivel, and in their  
place

Lo grisly skeletons agape, agrin,

And an awful Shape the pard drawn car within,

And a Shadow of Darkness over all the ways.

O Lord and Master of our nights and days,

In Life's full tide thy triumph doth begin.

Yea, in the hour of utterest ecstasy

Thou art ever near, thy time but tarrieth

Till the summit of joy is reached, and then as we

With slackening muscles and with quickening  
breath

Stand waiting full fruition—lo we see

Death under us—Death round us—o'er us

Death.

## DIS-ILLUSION.

I HAVE set you in my heart's most sacred shrine,  
I have hailed you goddess of my life so long,  
You have had all my kisses, all my song,  
These many years, and I have seen you shine  
O'er all life's storms sole star and heaven-sent sign  
That haven was somewhere, and rest from  
wrong,  
And crowns of victory for the brave and strong;  
And deemed the crowns half won—the haven  
mine.

So when clouds gathered, and the storm-wind  
blew,  
My heart, star-guided, doubted not, and lo  
There came the touch that proved you through and  
through,  
Weak wavering nothing : now at last I know  
I loved a woman that I thought was you—  
I love you not—I never loved you—go.

## A MODERN VENUS.

WHAT have ye done to her that she is thus?  
What change hath fallen on her?—is this she  
Who rose a splendid goddess from the sea,  
When our old earth was young and amorous?  
For lo her face is sunken and piteous,  
Her eyes are full of bitter memory :  
Our lady of love and laughter can it be  
This is the face and form thou hast for us?

Nay, in this weary world thou hast no place ;  
Thy day is dead, and while the ages roll,  
Dead thy free joy, dead all thy glory and grace.  
Yet cannot man his impious hand control,  
But thus must mar the beauty of thy face  
With the modern malady he calls the soul.

---

## AT PENSHURST.

PRIMROSES, violets, the first leaves of Spring,  
A sky of April's tender blue and white,  
And through the soft air sighing with delight,  
The sound of unseen waters murmuring,  
And dreamy Sabbath bells, and birds that sing  
At Heaven's gate, far hidden from our sight.  
Yet I meseems see but a far-off fight,  
Hear but swords shriek and stricken helmets ring,  
Round Astrophel, where on the ground he lies.  
O Jewel of the Realm, O all men's praise,  
What was thy comfort when the end was come?  
Surely thou sawest with thy dying eyes,  
Violet and primrose making fair the ways,  
And waking Spring near this thy lovely home.

---

## THE ASSIGNATION.

THE darkness throbbed that night with the  
great heat,  
And my heart throbbed at thought of what  
should be ;  
The house was dumb, the lock slid silently,  
I only heard the night's hot pulses beat  
Around me as I sped with quiet feet  
Down the dark corridors, and once the sea  
Moaned in its slumber, and I stayed, but she  
Came forth to meet me lily-white and sweet.

Was there a man's soul ever worth her kiss ?  
Silent and still I stood, and she drew near,  
And her lips mixed with mine, and her sweet  
breath  
Fanned my hot face ; and afterward I wis,  
What the sea said to us I did not hear ;  
But now I know it spake of Doom and Death.

---



## IN THE ISLE OF ELY.

## I.

THE broad lone land sleeps silent in the sun  
This summer morn, save that about our way  
The plover's cry and the lark's roundelay,  
Or from some farmstead the cock's clarion,  
Mingled with murmuring of floods that run  
Through grass and flowers makes musical the  
day.

Here Hereward held the Norman hosts at bay  
When Ely's isle an island was, and won  
The fame that lives though life, and all things  
pass.

Now the rich fields with harvest promise fair,  
One level fruitful plain around us lie;  
Where boomed the bittern from the murk morass  
We walk, and see through the clear morning air  
The fane of Ely towering in the sky.

## II.

The haunt of rebels in the days of old  
Be now for aye the home of men made free ;  
Their sons who fought with kings, and with the  
    sea,  
And won this fruitful land, whose harvest gold  
Now blazes in the sun ; the land we hold  
Unto our children and their sons in fee,  
Knowing none shall supplant them if they be  
Like the rough Fenmen, fearless, steadfast, bold.  
Who said *Thus far—no farther* to the waves,  
And stayed them—who to crowned men spake  
With those keen tongues of steel that do not  
lie,  
And stayed them also. 'Tis no home for slaves,  
Of priest and king—for men who kneel and  
quake,  
This haunt of rebels in the days gone by.

---

## SATIETY.

NOW all thy kisses have grown cold and dead  
And honeyless, like bees by winter killed ;  
Satiety's cold breath their life hath chilled,  
And were thy lips turned white that are so red,  
And all the gold grown grey upon thy head,  
Thou couldst not seem more changed—my soul  
was filled  
Once with thy love, but all that wine is spilled,  
And from the cup its very scent is fled.

Thy bosom was a garden of sweet flowers,  
Where is the fragrance gone that once was  
there ?  
Unwind thine arms, unseal thy lips, let be.  
Thou canst not wake the spell of olden hours,  
Never again mine eyes will find thee fair,  
And yet I know the change is all in me.

---

## THE BROKEN GODS.

THEY are all cast down, there is not one that  
stands.

I worshipped them—I tread them in the dust,  
Having found them all false gods wherein to  
trust

Is but to build the house upon the sands.  
Their wrath I fear not, broken are their bands  
In sunder, and I know that they were thrust  
From their high places by a doom most just,  
Being only idols fashioned of men's hands.

Yet I that deemed me free, find in their stead  
Foul shadows of worse rulers—Shame and Fear,  
And despot lusts, and I am still a slave :  
Surely there is no hope of freedom here—  
Surely there is no peace but with the Dead—  
Safe from all gods, and quiet in the grave.

---

WITH A COPY OF "THE DEFENCE OF  
GUINEVERE."

I.

**I** PROMISED you verse, and verse I bring,  
I bring you his though I promised you mine,  
I promised you water, I bring you wine,  
And instead of a linnet a lark shall sing.  
You shall hear true steel upon basnets ring,  
And banners flap with the wind in his line,  
And the lists shall sound beneath eyes that  
shine,  
As the trumpets blow for the tourneying.

You shall live again in the brave old time,  
When men fought more with the sword than pen,  
You shall hear the crashing of splintered spears,  
And sometimes shuddering through the rhyme,  
Catch the strong sobs of rough mailed men,  
Or heart-broken women who have no tears.

## II.

The sobs and! the heart-break we have them still;  
The rest is lost in the long-ago ;  
And the light of Romance is an after-glow  
Tingeing an evening gray and chill :  
Though many a trumpet is pealing shrill,  
'Tis but his own that each doth blow,  
And 'stead of meeting full-front his foe,  
He pricks his back with a venomous quill.

They had better hap in those days I deem,  
And were wiser than we, knowing two things  
true,  
The strong right arm, and the bare steel blue,  
The keen steel smiting through lie and crime ;  
But who are we to arraign the time?  
For he only sings, and I only dream.

---

## A DEAD LEADER.

GOD'S will be done, He doeth all things well.  
They shovel clods into the gaping grave  
That hides our chief—the young—the bright—  
the brave,  
Our chosen champion who untimely fell  
Before the battle. Let us not rebel,  
But bow our heads. Bow suppliant and bow  
slave—  
I wear not livery—have no boon to crave.  
God's will be done—be undone the will of Hell.

Who hath given you to know this will is God's?  
Oft times ye mourn the vanquishment of right,  
And evil's victories underneath the sun,  
This was such victory: surely from these clods  
Our starry soldier armed in Hell's despite,  
Should rise to lead us if God's will were done.

---

## DE PROFUNDIS.

MY God, I fight with beasts and fiends of Hell,  
Till Thy sweet earth seems one black  
funeral pyre,

And Thy soft sky a whirling gulf of fire,  
And in my ears booms an eternal knell—  
Spirits I have evoked I cannot quell ;

I see but demon faces mad with ire,

And on each hand the threatening shadows dire,  
Of awful Death and Life intolerable.

I know not whence I came, nor where I go ;

I know not what Thou art, nor what am I,  
Saving most wretched ; but there are who know

Thee for a God of love who hear'st the cry  
Of the heart-broken. God, if this be so,  
Hear me and pardon me, and let me die.

---



## "THE PHILOSOPHY OF WAR."

YE cry *Peace—Peace*—and there is not any  
peace ;

Ye say that Nature's law is love ; ye prate  
Of gods who hearken to the importunate ;

Yet cruelty and slaughter never cease

One moment night or day, blood flows in seas,

And men and beasts alike are crushed by Fate.

There is no peace, and Nature's law is hate ;

There is none to hear you ; rise from off your  
knees,

And seek your prey, lest ye be preyed upon

Before your time ; whet tusks, fulfil your part

In the murderous *mêlée* that is Nature's plan ;

Your loving-kindness is a robe put on,

That fits you not ; for all the tailor's art,

He cannot hide the tusks and claws of man.

---

## IN MEMORIAM.

LILIAN ADELAIDE NEILSON.

YEA, "unsubstantial death is amorous,"  
And seeing youth and fame at height hath  
now

Kissed her between the laurels on her brow,  
In the full hour of triumph glorious  
The cold last kiss that winneth all of us  
Ere long—nor for his love's sake would allow  
Life to make weary, Time to bruise or bow :  
Whom the gods love indeed he taketh thus.

She passes in the year's and life's mid-glow,  
Ere one leaf withers of the crowns we gave,  
Who deemed she should win many chaplets  
yet :  
But though we weep, let pride have place by woe,  
Strew only laurel-wreaths upon her grave,  
Write on her tombstone "Here lies Juliet."

## KING OF KINGS.

O DEATH, Death, Death ! Thou art the Lord  
of all,

And at Thy darkened shrine I bow mine head  
In this Thy temple, where for Thee are shed  
Man's blood and tears : gods, kings, and temples  
fall,

Thy reign, O Lord, is immemorial,  
Ever Thou waxest stronger and more dread,  
More populous grows Thy kingdom of the Dead,  
And joy and love and hope Thou hast in thrall.

We follow vain desires and idle things,  
We vex our souls with hollow hopes and fears,  
We dread the Future, and regret the Past :  
Thou comest, O Almighty, King of Kings,  
And stillest all the tumult of the years,  
And tak'st each babbler to Thy breast at last.

---

## TO J. R. W.

**WOULD** *thou wert happy, and content to tread  
The old pleasant ways wherein thy fathers trod,  
And found sweet peace.*

Yea, but where they did plod,  
'Mid grass and flowers, a leaf-arch overhead,  
A fiery blast has blown of change and dread,  
And the fierce storm is levelling with the sod  
Forsaken altars of a fallen God,  
Whose power is passed away and perished.

Therefore I grope the dark and baffling maze,  
Without a compass, lonely and outcast,  
Having but this of hope to cheer my days—  
That when the weary wilderness is past,  
Drawn to a single goal by divers ways,  
All men may find the self-same light at last.

---

## AT THE CORBIERE.

THE lighthouse—white against a white-hot sky,  
On a black throne of rocks beneath whose lee  
Jagged death-fanged reefs fret the imperious sea  
To foam and fury ; the fierce tide chafes by,  
Clamorous and angry, the great sun is high,  
The heaven is cloudless, and alone are we :  
I take thy hand in mine I turn to thee ;  
The roar and whirl stream past us as we lie,  
And are forgotten. Be it so, O Love !  
Life's tide swells fiercely 'gainst the reefs of  
Fate,  
Passion's mad currents each with other war ;  
Stand thou at watch the endless strife above,  
Till in the darkest hour of hell and hate  
The midnight tempest strike thee to a star.

---

## FAME.

WHAT is this fame that men so much desire,  
And follow with sore travail all their days,  
Seeking the self-same goal by divers ways  
Of peace or war, flower-strewn or foul with mire?  
A changeful wind that blows a flickering fire,  
A little clamour of unthinking praise,  
An all-uneasy wreath of short-lived bays  
Between whose leaves bright eyes of serpents  
twire.  
A harlot-queen, whose beauty still beguiles  
All souls of men to follow in her train,  
Though each one sees her false and whorish wiles,  
And knows his truth and constancy are vain.  
Even such as I on whom she never smiles  
Follow like fools with lifelong toil and pain.

---

## THE WORLD'S WAY.

THE merchants babble in the buzzing mart,  
The politicians wrangle ceaselessly,  
The barrister is noisy for a fee,  
And for a fee the parson plays his part.  
Chatter of culture, science, letters, art—  
Of what is, what is not, and what should be—  
Grows louder and more loud continually,  
Wearying the head and making sick the heart.

So whirls the clamorous world through boundless  
space,  
'Mid the grave stars that sing together still—  
This piteous lump of living and lifeless clods—  
Deeming creation lists and stands at gaze.  
And like low thunder o'er its cackling shrill,  
Sounds the derisive laughter of the gods.

---

## SIN AND DEATH.

**A**LL day the heavens burned red before mine eyes,  
And in the mirror my wan face burned white ;  
My parched lips quivered with their past delight,  
Their dower of kisses and of passionate cries,  
Dying to silence and long, slow, deep sighs,  
Their tender treasure of the sweet last night ;  
And I could feel, as sleep drew o'er my sight,  
Beneath my head a soft breast fall and rise,

And when I woke there stood one at my side,  
With hood thrown back from the fleshless face  
of Death,  
Who wound me with cold arms right  
amorously,  
And said : Last night my sister was thy bride—  
Sin, do men call her ; and behold God saith  
None lies with her but after lies with Me.

---



AFTER READING "LA FAUTE DE L'ABBÉ  
MOURET."

THE great blind force of Life primordial,  
Selfish, exultant, seeking but its own ;  
*Increase and multiply* its creed alone  
In man, in beast, in flower—alike in all :  
And the counter-current supernatural  
That through the ages in mankind hath grown  
Ever more strong : Passion's Euroclydon  
Urging on each with furious clarion call.

Till like two mighty mid-sea waves they meet,  
With shattering shock that rends the echoing  
sky,  
And headlong rush and ruin of defeat,  
And overwhelming roar of victory :  
Which wins what matters ? Equally they beat  
'Twixt them to nought the waif Humanity.

---

## DESECRATION.

WHEN the worshipper by prayer and fasting  
worn

Arose and rent the veil that hid the shrine,  
And found behind nought glorious or divine,  
But a grinning idol merely—there was born  
Of his deep despair and miserable self-scorn  
Desire to defile that sanctuary malign,  
And he broke the altars, filled the cups with  
wine,  
And held high revel with harlots there till morn.

So when I found the Love I worshipped nought,  
I did defile His temple, now I see,  
Not the oblivion and revenge I sought,  
But the stain of that defilement covering me,  
And the drunken harlots of foul deed and thought  
Lying around as Day dawns silently.

---

## LIFE AND DEATH.

## I.

**H**OLD not thy life too dear because of death ;  
Why wilt thou nought but labour all thy days?  
Thou winnest, but shalt never wear the bays,  
Thou sowest and another gathereth  
The fruitage. Live thou then as one who saith :  
*I wait a summons*, and with prayer and praise  
And helpful kindness fills the time he stays,  
And unregretfully yields up his breath.

Wilt thou pull down thy barns and greater build  
Because thy life's land laughs one golden sea,  
From East to West, from North to South fulfilled  
With promise of harvest ? Nay, for verily  
Dreaming thy dreams thou findest stricken and  
chilled  
Thou fool even now thy soul required of thee.

## II.

Because of Death hold not thy life too cheap ;  
Plan for the years—found broad and strong—aim  
high :

Nobly to fail is more than victory  
Over unworthy foes : mourn not nor weep,  
One span of life thou hast 'twixt deep and deep,  
Be all thy care to fill it gloriously :  
Live even as if thou knew'st thou couldst not  
die ;  
This day is short—there will be years for sleep.

Therefore work thou while it is called to-day,  
And let the night of the night's things take care.  
By those strong souls who have made our earth  
more fair

With their strenuous service unto all for aye  
I charge thee work, and let not Death dismay  
Nor the shadow of death, but greatly hope and  
dare.

---

*L'ENVOI.*

*A RUIN of carven marble in the grass  
Of a lone grave where no one comes to weep ;  
Base shaft and capital one mingled heap  
Of splinters. A fair monument it was  
Upraised by one, they tell us as we pass,  
Over his sweet young wife who fell on sleep  
Untimely ; he reared high and founded deep  
And builded strong—then blasted all to fragments as  
You see it now.*

*I thought a shrine to raise :  
Hewed mountain marble, dived for jewels rare,  
And washed Time's sand for gold, and labourèd  
Heart, hand, and brain for many weary days.  
Now ye who pass may, if ye will, see where  
Under its ruins all my youth lies dead.*

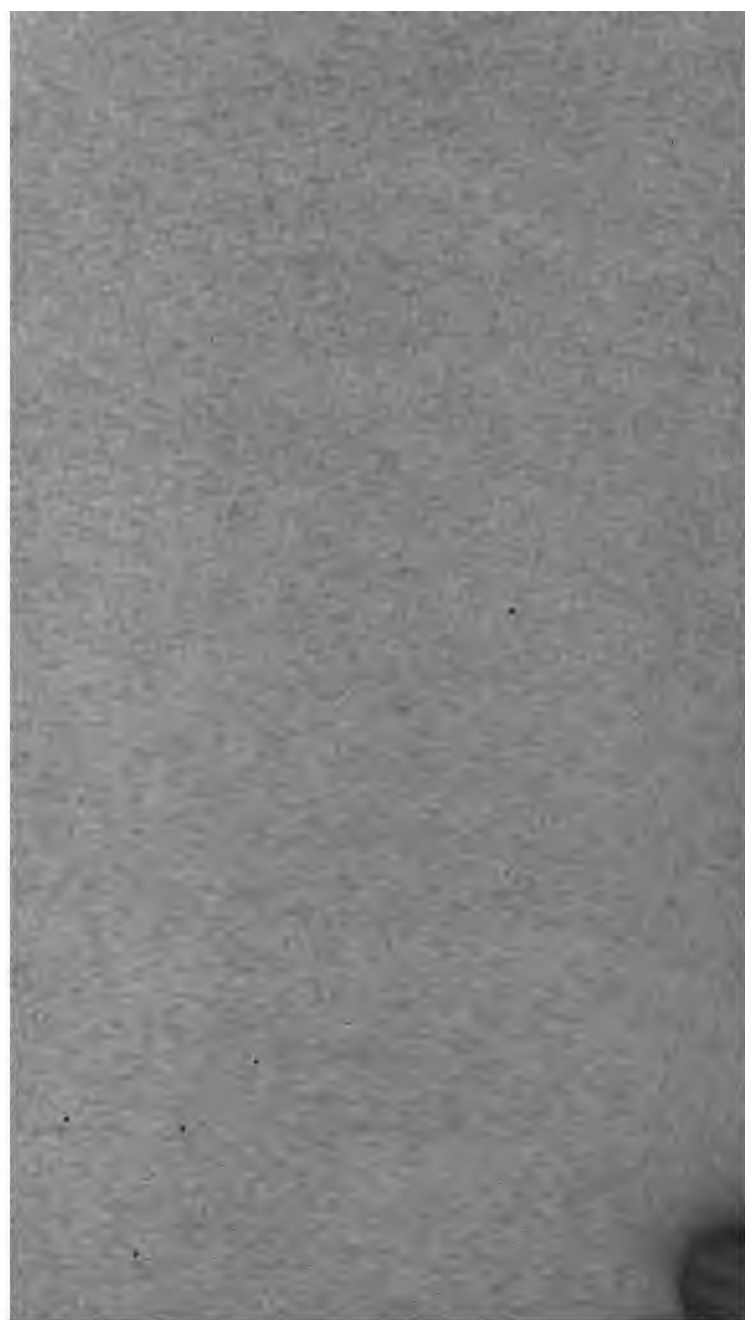
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